

IMAGINATION

SCIENCE FICTION

AUGUST, 1958

35c

Special Science Feature

**NEXT STOP
THE MOON**



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"I call it a bad day if I don't make \$25 before noon"

(This chair alone brought \$4.50 with twenty-five minutes work and 32¢ in cleaning materials.)

"Just a few months ago I made the big move. I gave up my job and started spending all my time in the little business I had been running on the side. It wasn't an easy decision, but, now I'm tickled to death I made it. Not just because I'm my own boss or because I have an excellent chance of making over \$10,000 this year. It goes deeper than that.

"You see, this idea has caught on like wildfire in my town. Not a day goes by without my phone ringing with women calling for appointments. The beauty of it is that once a woman becomes my customer, she calls back year after year. Not only that, she tells her friends, too, and they call me. Before I know it I'm swamped with work. (And at \$7.50 an hour net profit it doesn't take long before my bank account is really mushrooming.)

"Funny thing, but back last year, before I started, I never realized the money there was in this business waiting for someone to come along and collect it. Just think: every house in town has furniture and most have rugs or carpeting. I concentrate on just the better homes and have more work than I can handle. You know why? Because women are fussy about their furnishings. Can't stand to see them dirty. That's why they call me over every year.

"The average job is worth \$25.00 to me and takes a little over 2 hours. Out of this, after paying for materials, advertising and other expenses I net about \$15.00 clear profit. This means I need just 3 jobs a day to clear \$11,250.00 in a year. Frankly, since this will be my first full-time year I'll be glad to hit the \$10,000 mark. But after that this business should grow larger each year until I have to hire men to help me handle the business.

Personally Trained by Another Dealer

"Believe me there's nothing magic about it. I didn't know a thing about cleaning and mothproofing before I became a Duraclean dealer. But after my application was accepted I was trained right here in town by a successful dealer from another city. I was astonished by the short time it took me to become an expert. Actually, much of the credit must go to the Duraclean process, which is so safe it has earned the Parents' Magazine Seal.

"The portable machine you see is just one of the electrical machines I use. It manufactures a light aerated foam with a peculiar action chemists call 'peptizing'. It means that instead of being scrubbed deep into the fabric, dirt is gently **ABSORBED** by the foam, leaving the fabric clean all the way down. Women can't believe their eyes when they see how it works. Colors appear bright again, and rug pile unmat and rises like new. I don't have to soak rugs or upholstery to get them clean, which ends the problem of shrinkage, and means the furnishings can be used again the very same day. This alone has brought me a lot of customers.

"As a Duraclean dealer I make money with four other services, too: **Duraproof**... which makes furnishings immune to moth and carpet beetle damage (it's backed by a six year warranty). **Durashield**, a brand new dirt-delaying treatment. It coats fabrics with an invisible film that keeps dirt out. **Duraguard**, another new service, flameproofs draperies, upholstery and carpets to reduce charring

by
**Harold
Holmes**



and the tendency of fires to flame up. And **Spotcraft**, which consists of special chemical products for removing stubborn spots and stains. On jobs where I perform all five services, I multiply profits!

"One of the nicest things about being a Duraclean dealer is that I get continuous help from Duraclean Headquarters. My services are nationally-advertised in famous magazines like McCall's, House Beautiful and many others. I also get a complete advertising kit prepared by experts. (There's even a musical commercial!) I get a monthly magazine full of methods to build business and I can meet with other dealers at Duraclean conventions. I'm also backed by insurance. In fact there are over 25 regular services I get under their unique System.

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William L. Hamling
Editor

Frances Hamling
Managing Editor

Paul Quaiver
Art Editor

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We've known for some time that the most popular issue of Imagination yet published was the January 1952 issue. (The way we number them, issue #8.) We actually get hundreds of requests for a back copy of this issue. Of course, we cannot supply them—we barely have a half dozen office copies!

Still, we knew there was one way of satisfying everybody who missed reading the great novel, **SPECIAL DELIVERY** which we ran in that issue. And not only satisfying those who were trying to get it, but thrill the many newcomers to science fiction as well. We could run it again.

Now ordinarily we have a strict policy against reprinting any of our stories. Particularly since we have so many fine new ones awaiting publication! But we thought it would be a good idea to make an exception in the case of **SPECIAL DELIVERY**, so we've relaxed our rule. We realize that the early issues of *Madge* are just not obtainable, and that we published many classic stories during that period. We know you'd like to see us bring them all out again, but that would be relaxing our rule a bit too far! At any rate, you've now got a *Madge* classic in your hands so stop pestering us for back issues we just don't have!

Another bit of good news for you this month. We'd like to announce the debut of our companion magazine, **SPACE TRAVEL**, which has already gone on sale as you read this. **SPACE TRAVEL** takes the place of our former magazine, *Imaginative Tales*. With the space age upon us we felt that *Tales* would be better represented completely on its own. (Many readers have suggested through the years that the title was too close to **IMAGINATION**.) So if you haven't seen **SPACE TRAVEL** yet, dash out and get a copy. You'll find it featuring top factual articles in keeping with current developments, and of course, the best in science fiction stories.

SPACE TRAVEL will also feature regular departments where you the reader can have a voice, as is our policy on *Madge* too. You'll recognize the July **SPACE TRAVEL** by the terrific Malcolm Smith cover depicting a space station.

A teaser for things to come is in order too. We've got a new novel on our desk right now by Harlan Ellison that is a shocker. Titled, **THE ASSASSINS**, this novel will be talked about for quite awhile, we predict. It's laid in the near future and is a powerful tale of what *might* happen on Earth. We'll try and run it in our next issue, so watch for the October issue.with

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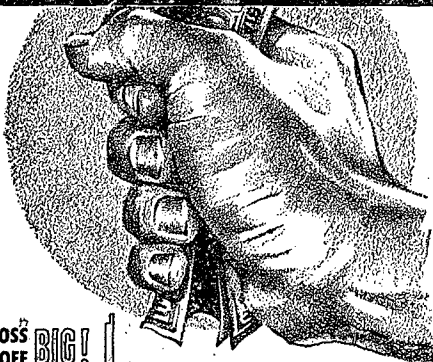
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SPECIAL SCIENCE FEATURE

Next Stop The Moon

by

Henry Bott

RESEARCH ENGINEER

The big jump into space is coming sooner than you think. And the first stop will be our solar neighbor, Luna. How long will the trip take? How will the first men react to an alien world? What will they find? Here are the facts.

"NINETY-THREE million miles from a middle-aged Sun which is located not far from the rim of the Galaxy of the Milky Way, there is a twin planetary system. This system is a remarkable structure because it consists of two planets, the smaller of which orbits around the larger at a mean distance of 239,000 miles and this smaller planet is a lifeless pock-marked sphere, while the larger is a verdant jungle teeming with organic life. Intelligent life on the larger planet is on the verge of launching itself into space, primarily at this time to visit its satellite if the smaller planet can be so-called . . ."

This somewhat fanciful consideration of the Luna-Earth planetary system may seem a little strange to our eyes, but such an objective view more closely reinforces our feeling of astonishing good luck—we have a *very* close neighbor, celestially speaking—that we have not only an object of beauty in the sky but also a platform from which greater efforts can be launched.

As short a time as a decade ago, one could examine the Moon through a telescope, observe its every detail, and with little difficulty imagine himself upon it. But in the back of his mind, the observer could only think—someday, yes; we'll get there before the cen-

ELLIPTICAL TRAJECTORY OF SPACESHIP

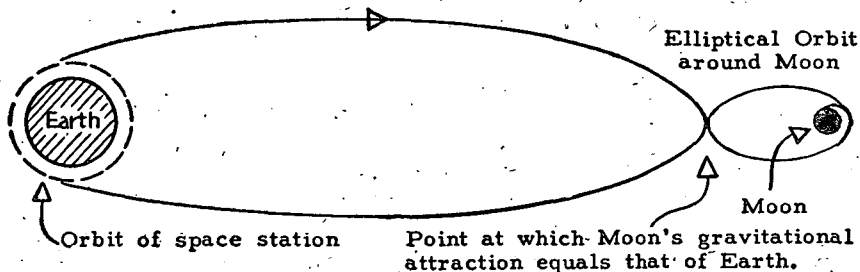


FIGURE I

Hypothetical (but probable) course for first Earth-Moon trip). Space ship leaves orbit of space station tangentially. Its trajectory to point of equal Lunar gravitational attraction is an ellipse. Similarly as it falls toward the Moon, its trajectory is elliptical until it finally spirals in for landing.

tury is out. It is *possible* that before this article appears in print, an unmanned rocket may have made the trip!

In the short time of a decade, hope has bloomed into certainty.

Just what is there about the Moon that makes it such an attractive target? Availability is the answer.

Its mean distance of 239,000 miles is, astronomically speaking, a mere skip across space. From an energy standpoint it is as far practically, as the remotest planets of the Solar System. In this double way it provides every facility for testing space travel that can be imagined. If we can get to the Moon we can get anywhere in the System. It was no accident that

Jules Verne's "De la Terre a la Lune" fastened on the Moon as a target, as have a thousand science fiction stories since.

No justification must be made for making the trip to the Moon. There are many reasons why men should and will go there, but the first one is, the Moon is in the sky!

Let us consider the first trip from the Earth to the Moon. If we are speaking of an unmanned exploratory rocket equipped with radio and TV, we can say that we are on the verge of its happening momentarily. If we are speaking of a manned rocket carrying humans, as well as observational equipment, we can say that we are not likely to see it take place—ever! Of course that last remark is simply

intended to point out that a manned trip to the Moon will take place *from an orbiting satellite*, not from the Earth itself. In spacial parlance, two jumps through a strong gravitational field are much easier than one big jump.

Evidently then, the first chore in reaching the Moon requires that a manned space station first be set in orbit. As everyone knows this operation is being undertaken with vigor. We can discount momentarily the unmanned Moon rockets, spectacular though they will be. Our concern is with the men who make the trip.

It is not important at what altitude the manned satellite is established. Whatever its height, its tangential velocity and its position in the Earth's gravitational field are such that additional velocities necessary to be imparted to space-ships leaving for the Moon or the planets; are reduced to modest steps indeed. To launch a manned space ship from an eighteen, sixteen, or fourteen thousand mile an hour (tangential velocity) Earth satellite to the Moon requires an additional velocity of only a few thousand miles an hour. To send a space ship directly from the Earth to the Moon requires that it be given an initial velocity of at least twenty-five thousand miles an hour—all in one push through an ocean

of air. Throwing orbiting satellites into position requires velocities only of eighteen thousand miles an hour. This is a significant difference when chemical fuels are the power source.

Assume that a hypothetical space ship is set for the Lunar trip. This means that it is attached to the satellite space station where it has taken on its fuel and crew. Let us consider the velocities and times involved in the journey to the Moon. First, because the space ship already has the velocity of the space station (say 18,000 miles per hour) only an additional velocity of about 7,000 miles per hour need be supplied to give the necessary 24,900 miles per hour velocity necessary to reach the Moon. This is a little less than the escape velocity of 7 miles per second with which we are so familiar. In other words, the space ship, simply by being in orbit with the satellite has already completed the bulk of its journey! The worst part by far is done—naturally this is in terms of fuel economy. Every newton of thrust dependent upon every joule of energy must be conserved and accounted for.

WITH THE VELOCITIES cited, the trip to the Moon would take about four or five days. The broad tolerance expressed here simply is accounted for by the fact

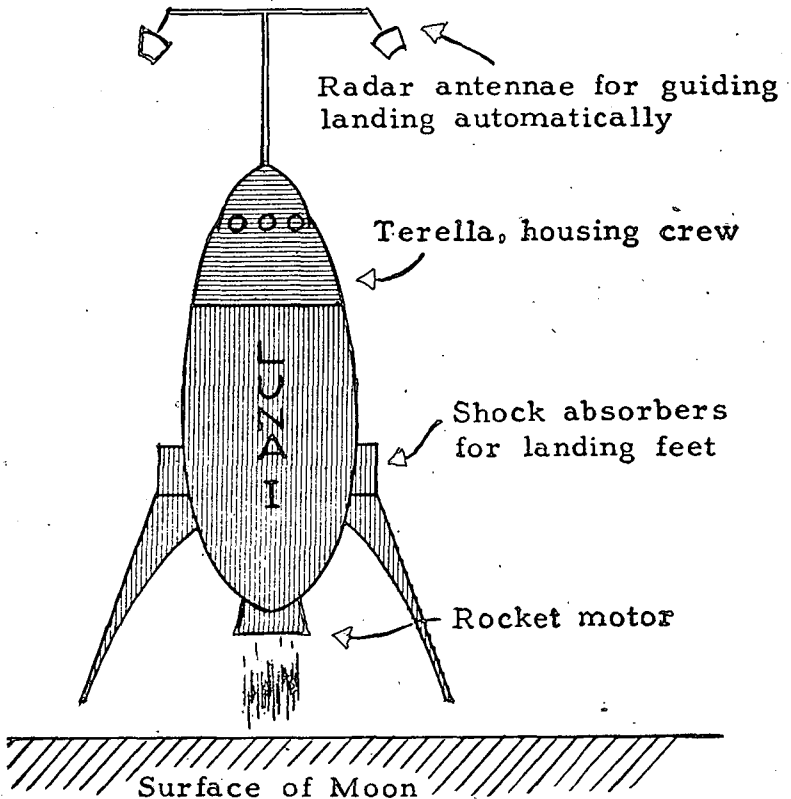


FIGURE II

Rocket landing on Moon, balancing Lunar gravity against its rocket thrust. Likely, most of landing will be automatically controlled through combination of inertial guidance and radar. Unorthodox shapes of ships will be possible (note above and front cover) due to no air resistance in space or on Moon.

that we are allowing some leeway in velocities. This would, not be true in actuality since every econo-

my would be practiced strictly.

If "exotic" fuels are developed by this time, or if for other tech-

nical reasons fuel economy need not be preserved (this is a most unlikely "if") then the Moon journey can be shortened considerably by relatively modest increases in velocity. For a few thousand miles per hour increase in take-off velocity from the satellite, the duration of the Lunar trip can be shortened to as little as a single day.

That fierce gravitational "hole" in which Terran inhabitants are immersed loses much of its terror and drag as soon as anything is put into orbit. While we speak glibly of "modest velocities" it must be remembered always that the energy and velocity demands to orbit anything are not decreased a bit. But since in this year 1958 men have already orbited "objects", we can feel pretty optimistic about their orbiting others.

The "four-day" velocity we spoke of presumed a thrust just sufficient to carry the rocket over the threshold point at which the Earth's attraction for it, and the Moon's, are equal. From this point on, the Moon would attract the space ship and braking rocketry would have to be practiced. This problem has already been carefully considered. All that would be necessary is for the rocket to be so oriented that it was moving "backward", that is, its tubes pointed toward the Moon. Obviously, thrust

would oppose the Lunar attraction.

The obvious method of orienting a free-fall body in space is through the use of gyroscopes. Three such spinning masses, with mutually perpendicular axes allow the space ship, because of the conservation of angular momentum, to be given any relative orientation desired.

The idea of landing a rocket ship on the Moon by balancing its exhaust thrust against the Moon's gravitational field has also been well considered in the literature of space travel. That this maneuver would be perfectly feasible is clear to anyone who has observed a vertical take-off aircraft performing the identical maneuver save that it is using gas-turbine thrust.

The Moon's gravitational field also assists us here. Its attractive force is only one-sixth that of the Earth. That little fact is enormously useful. It decreases the landing problem by a large factor. Mechanically in every way the space ship for Lunar landing can be much flimsier than a counterpart trying to do the same operation against a Terran gravitational field. The lack of Lunar air is a handicap in some ways; it precludes the use of aerodynamic surfaces which might have made landing a bit easier.

But we're getting ahead of the story. Let us go back to the space ship taking off from the satellite.

Before it starts of course, it is a part of the space station and its occupants are not feeling any gravitational attraction—they're in free-fall. When the ship starts, it does so with a few seconds of thrust, perhaps of one or two G's magnitude and for this brief time the crewmen feel the familiar tug of a sensation they haven't known since their days on Earth. But it lasts only briefly. In seconds they are again in free-fall and they will remain in that condition until the rocket motors are started up for the landing, or possibly for corrective action to their course. It must be noted here in that connection, that corrective action can easily be taken by the "built-in" computers that the space ship has—its men with brains! An unmanned space ship to the Moon suggests problems in this regard.

Probably the best description of such a Lunar trip can be summarized in one phrase—it will be boring. Remember that these men will have been in space on the satellite for a long time and the novelty of seeing the Earth loom overhead will not be great. Possibly though, as it shrinks from the monstrous size they've known it to be, there will be a nostalgic tug—after all that little ball is home!

All during their four day trip, the spacemen will be in constant

radio communication with the space station. The environment of the space ship will be hardly different from that of a present-day submarine, except for the absence of gravity. Everything seems to point however to the fact that this condition of free-fall is neither injurious nor discomfiting and that it may even be a state which a man might learn to enjoy.

The trip will not be as prosaic as we've made it sound. Perhaps from a technical standpoint it will be an assured thing, but certainly the crewmen can't fail to realize that locked in their little metal cylinder they are going on the greatest journey ever made by man. Perhaps such a realization may be a little overwhelming.

The first manned ship probably will not attempt a Lunar landing. As Jules Verne's astronauts did, the initial explorers will be content to establish themselves in an orbit around the Moon and from that advantageous position, make the detailed observations they wish to record.

As has been remarked, when landing ("mooning" would be the more exact term) has been done by riding the rocket in an inverse take-off, where will the explorers be? They sit in their metallic terella on a Lunar plain, as hostile an environment as men can conceive of.

What now? Obviously exit must be made and first-hand exploration begun.

Many artists have effectively and beautifully portrayed the incredible "Moonscapes." The majesty of the mountain peaks, the magnitude of the craters and the vastness of the plains, can be observed through any fifty-power telescope. To see these things at first hand however will be impressive. By the time the Lunar explorers have landed they will have the region of their contact so well mapped through knowledge gained by prior remote exploration, that there will be no possibility of their being lost.

They will exit through an airlock of course. Their space suits will provide an environment which is the duplicate of the spaceship's. Radio communications will be simple. The low gravity will give rise to exploratory leaps and bounces. Undoubtedly a strict discipline will necessarily be observed in order to prevent any accidents. Constantly it must be kept in mind that airlessness offers such a threatening environment that every precaution must be exercised.

WHAT DO EXPLORERS expect to do? Clearly they must bring back an exhaustive photographic record. Also they must bring back a general scientific record just as do present-day Ter-

ran explorers. Of prime importance will be the collection of samples. Of precisely what materials is the Moon's crust composed and what is their concentration and distribution? Answers to these questions can be very important for it must be remembered that after the first explorers touch the Moon, they are going to be followed by elaborate expeditions which will establish permanent bases. If the substance of the Moon can be utilized or transformed in such a way as to minimize the amount of raw materials that need be conveyed from Earth, Lunar colonization can proceed at a rapid pace.

Science is always conservative. Generally what appears to be promising in discovery, turns out to be overwhelming. This has been true of almost every scientific advance. Therefore it is impossible to imagine all of the effects that can result from successful "occupation" of the Moon. We can believe however that by the time this successful colonization takes place—even on so small a scale—the obvious reason for landing on the Moon, that is, constructing military bases to menace the Earth, will be absurd. To carry the political pretensions—and *tensions*—of Terra into space seems ridiculous, although this kind of thing is being done to encourage the develop-

ment of the very spacial adventures we are speaking about.

When you peer through a telescope and look at the barren Lunar surface and realize that within years you will see evidence of human habitation, you can't help but be amazed. Signal lights and even evidence of structures will be detectable through telescopes of moderate power. When the Lunar landings occur they will be the most intensively observed explorations that have ever happened.

The first explorers will be occupied not only taking observations and collecting samples, but they will be laying the "groundwork" for future installations. Undoubtedly a permanent radio station supplied with Solar or atomic power will be left behind when the explorers leave. Possibly a flashing beacon will similarly be constructed. Depending on how elaborate this initial landing is, it is also possible that several space ships may make the trip and only one will return with the explorers. The remaining ships will have been dismantled, cannibalized, and rebuilt into a permanent structure to be used by future landing groups.

Because of the low gravity, an acceleration at the Moon's surface of only about 5.4 feet per second, per second, the take-off and landing problems are much reduced.

The economy of the operation compared with what must be done to leave and land on the Earth, is greater.

Jumping ahead a number of years, it is not hard to imagine a self-sufficient colony existing on the Moon, a Lunar city. As has often been suggested, we may find that the human body unconstrained by the high gravitational field of the Earth, may bloom even though hampered by disabilities like heart trouble. Other illnesses too may be cured in low gravitational fields. From a medical point of view the lack of gravity can possibly be "just what the doctor ordered."

Another major point to be made in considering the Lunar landings is, that they will serve as precise forerunners of planetary landings such as those of Mars and Venus. The experience gained in landing on the airless sphere of the Moon will apply closely to landing on the nearly airless ball of Mars or its satellites—when that time comes.

Lunar bases of the Moon can serve very well as a stepping-stone to the planets, but there is an "if" involved. Should the highly improbable situation develop that the Moon cannot provide a source of chemical fuel, then there will be no point in using the Moon as a jumping-off place to the planets. But if, as is expected, the Moon is

rich in the chemicals from which suitable rocket fuels can be easily manufactured, then, the Moon will make a perfect base, better than the satellites themselves. The reason for this is clear. Every gram of fuel that must be trundled up to the satellite space station from Earth, requires large amounts of fuel to carry it there, because of the potent gravitational field of the Earth. But the Moon, with its one-sixth Earth-g field, is much simpler to use as a launching site for rockets intended for Mars or Venus or the Outer Planets. The entire picture of interplanetary travel can take on a tremendously optimistic tone if there is, as undoubtedly there will be, an opportunity to use the Moon as a fuel-source.

The problem of astrogation between the Earth and the Moon is not a very difficult one, at least for the bulk of the trip. The greater part of the elliptical trajectory of the space ship will be governed purely by what thrust and direction was first given it, just as in any conventional rocket "shoot." This problem in "exterior ballistics" has already been solved for the hypothetical flight and it will be as successful as the similar solution for Alpha 1957, Beta 1957 and Alpha 1958, the present years' successful satellites. Because it can be expected that minor perturba-

tions will require that the trajectory be corrected slightly, some use will be made of minor corrective rocket thrust." Fortunately the space ships are equipped with superb computers—human beings—who can measure their position and take any necessary analytical steps. To measure their position at any time they will of course have available two methods, optical and radio. By measuring the apparent diameters of the Earth and the Moon they can place their position with good accuracy. Optical instruments for this purpose are highly sophisticated. Similarly they can measure time with remarkable accuracy and hence velocity.

As a check on their measurements they have radio which not only can inform them of their position and velocity as measured by independent observers at the space station and on Earth, but can also be used directly, through the Doppler principle, to give them their velocity. Radar also may be used over the relatively short distances between the space ship and Earth and between the space ship and the Moon, to give them accurate and independent fixes.

THE QUESTION of living within the spaceship has been treated in some detail in the numerous articles on environments and terellas. The physical prob-

lems even at this early date have been pretty well anticipated and allowed for. The matter of food, water, and air are trivial. Cosmic radiation seems unlikely to do more than at most temporary damage to the reproductive system and it is possible that by the time the trip is taken even this hazard will be eliminated either by knowledge of suspected lesser intensities, or by some as yet unknown shielding. Meteoric dangers are not great, purely from a probabilistic standpoint. The ones large enough to destroy the space ship are unlikely to hit it save once in a billion years! The much smaller ones which can erode the skin can be taken care of by a "double skin" if necessary.

The dramatic force inherent in making a landing on the Moon overshadows the question of what we shall find when we get there.

This is unfortunate, for the Moon propounds some fascinating questions of its own, the first and foremost of which is "what caused the Lunar craters"? Almost all scientific evidence today points to their meteoric origin, and laboratory tests can be devised in which the craters can be proportionally scaled by the act of dropping objects into frictionless fluids such as powders. But the positive answer can come only from the Lunar ex-

plorers. There are many other aspects of Lunar topography or Selenography which will be explained by the explorers. Anyone who glances at the Lunar surface through a telescope bubbles with questions of this kind.

Recent observations of the Moon have suggested that it possesses in some of the deepest craters, the barest traces of an atmosphere, an atmosphere so diffuse as to little more than a Terran vacuum. Also there are traces of color which suggest the remote possibility of vegetation of some kind. The literature of science will be vastly enriched by the answers that the first Selenographers produce.

After the establishment of Selene bases, artificial satellites will be orbited around the Moon, both for observational and fueling purposes. It is expected that within a very few years after the initial landings are made, the volume of space between the Earth and Moon will be a relative maze of equipment, ranging from satellites of both planets, through numerous space ships in transit. It might be noted here too that the sky will gain a number of "stars." These will simply be the powerfully illuminated lights of satellites and ships. With Solar power and atomic power we can be sure that the generation of conventional electric power in

space or on the satellites or on the surface of the Moon, will not be a problem.

These events of course will be a few years distant. At this time the world seems to be poised on the verge of making the first unmanned Lunar journey. Everything points to its occurrence. It is almost a certainty that before the year is out, such a trip may have been achieved. Its success will clearly point to how close the manned journey is.

In considering the enormous technological feat that a manned or even un-manned Lunar shot is, it is hard to refrain from the "oh-and-ah" school of astonishment; on the other hand when one realizes that only five or six years ago prominent astronomers were poohpooing the thought of space travel at all, such an action does not seem inappropriate. The very conception of men leaving this terrestrial sphere is awe-inspiring.

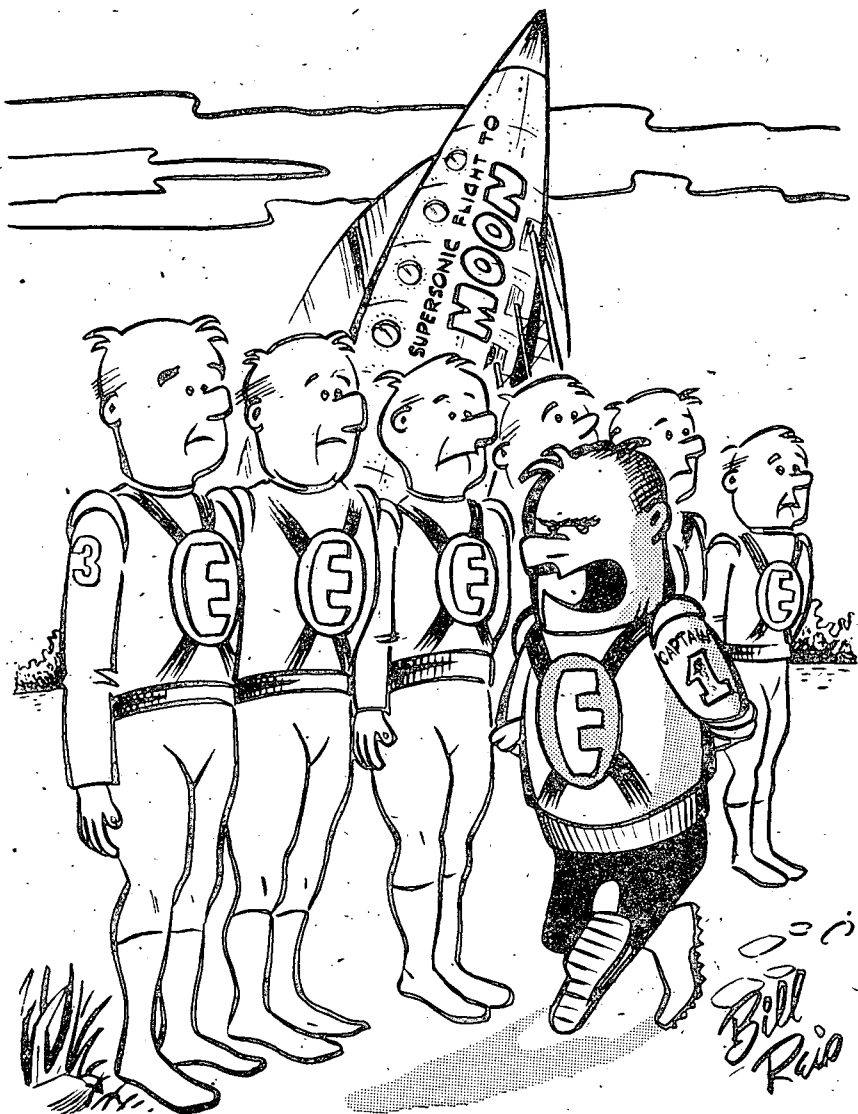
Fundamentally the real breakthrough to inter-Selene and interplanetary travel has already been made. The fact, that through the Heavens at this instant, orbit man-made satellites, proves that. In this respect the Lunar trip has already been well started. It would take so little more effort to make it a reality that it seems unfortunate that the public imagination has not

been seized more strongly by what already has been done! Apparently public reaction toward space travel will remain somewhat skeptical until people can look up at the Moon and see a human marking on it.

Most scientists wish to see this done. Marking the surface of the Moon with a hydrogen bomb is not necessary. Rather, as often as has been proposed, an unmanned rocket equipped with a "warhead" containing a few pounds of TNT or some similar modest explosive, plus another few pounds of plaster of paris or some similar reflective material, would suffice to make a mark sufficiently large to be seen through a telescope of low power, perhaps even through field glasses. It is this particular contact with the Moon that must be done at the earliest opportunity. It is a certainty that it is going to be done. About the only question remaining is, who is going to do it?

Alpha 1957, Beta 1957 and Alpha 1958—all three Earth-satellites have given us an idea of how close we are to interplanetary travel. All that remains is that—even before establishing a manned satellite—we actually put a small piece of the Earth on Earth's nearest neighbor, a planet not so much smaller than itself—the Moon!

Watch for the headlines.

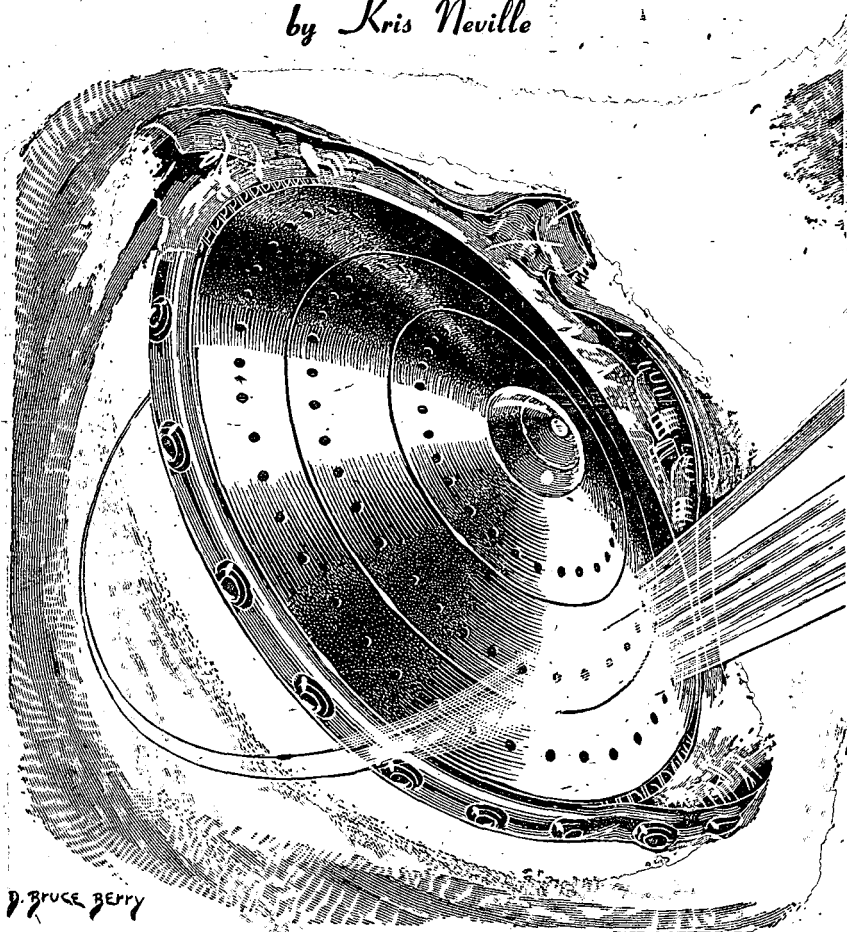


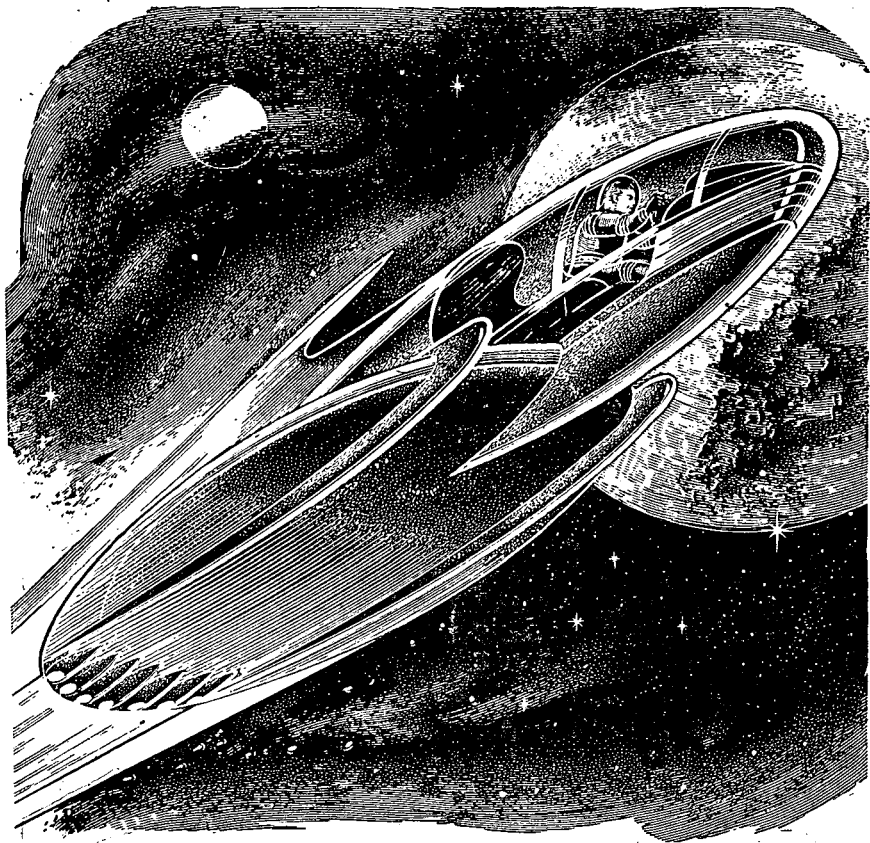
" . . . and remember, if you have to bail out, count slowly to 522,482 before you pull the ripcord!"

**Parr came to Earth as the advance guard
for an alien invasion. His mission: to see that
every person received a package being mailed—**

Special Delivery

by Kris Neville





● AN IMAGINATION CLASSIC ●

CHAPTER I

A CANNONADE of shell fire met the silver listening post as it zipped across the moonlit desert. It twisted erratically, trying to dodge. Then a radar controlled gun chuckled to itself, and

the listening post faltered in flight, slipped air, plunged sandward.

In the Advanceship, far above and to the west, one of the Knougs pressed a button and the listening post exploded in a white flare.

Afterwards, no fragments could be found. The newspapers said the

usual thing. The government issued the usual profession of disbelief—and finally even the gunner became convinced of the usual explanation: he had tried to pot Venus.

While on the Advanceship the Knougs continued to prepare for D-Day.

CHAPTER II

THREE days later, on D-Day minus thirty, the Advanceship began to move eastward, seeding down advancement toward strategic centers in North America.

Towns with big post offices.

And then on over the Atlantic toward other continents.

Parr was the first advancement man. The coat tails of his conservative double breasted suit fluttered gently as he fell, air, streaming by, fretted his hair. Except for the anti-grav pack strapped to his back, he could easily have been mistaken in a more probable setting for an Earthman.

Minutes later his feet touched the ground with scarcely a jolt. He peeled out of the anti-grav pack, pushed the button on its disintegrator time fuse and dropped the pack. He lit a cigar and blew smoke toward the cold bright stars.

He walked from the weedy lot to the nearest bus stop. No one else

was waiting. Darkness had concealed his descent. He sat down, stared stolidly at the darkened filling station on the opposite corner.

When he was halfway through the cigar the Los Angeles Red Bus came by and he stood up, boarded it, fumbled in his pocket for change.

"Thirty cents, buddy," the driver said.

Still holding the cigar, Parr counted out two dimes and two nickles. He tried to hand the driver the coins, which were excellent imitations, as was his suit, his cigar, and all the rest of the Earth articles.

"Put it in the box, buddy."

Parr obeyed.

"Hey," the driver said as Parr turned. "Your check." The driver held out a strip of red paper.

Parr took it.

"No smokin' on the bus, buddy."

Parr dropped the cigar and mashed it out. He shuffled down the aisle, sank into a seat and half closed his eyes.

Furtively, then, he began to study the occupants—his first near-at-hand contact with the natives. At the same time he tried to form a mental liaison with some of the other advancement men.

For a moment he thought he had one to the east, but there was a hazy swirl of interdiction that erased all contact.

ABANDONING further attempts he tried to search out the frequencies of the minds about him. Once he managed to touch a series of thoughts innocently concerned with household details and with an overtone of mild and nameless anxiety. Aside from that he received nothing except the din of electronic impressions at the extreme lower end of his range.

He half-turned to stare out of the window. The passing landscape was peaceful in starshine and the buildings stood proudly defenseless. In imagination he saw the illuminated, "You'll - take - a - shine - to - this - fine - wine" sign hanging askew over a backdrop of smoking rubble. And it was delicious to know that this would be fit and proper.

Although the preliminary intelligence report (based on nearly four years of preparatory scouting) contained no instance of Oholo activity on the planet, he listened, high up, on their frequencies, (particularly here, vulnerably near their own system it would be no fun fighting them.) He let his shoulders slump with relief, let the smile of satisfaction come. As reported, the frequencies were clear: Earth was, indeed, their blind flank.

He closed his eyes, relaxed completely, took quite a joy in the knowledge that shortly Earth

would be the lethal dagger pointed at the heart of the Oholo system.

At the Beverly Hills transfer-for-Hollywood - the - film - capital - of - the - world Station, two drunks boarded the bus and settled in the rear, singing mournfully.

Parr grew increasingly irritated by the delay. When the bus finally started, making the sharp turn from the lot and throwing his body to the right against the steel ledge of the window, he cursed under his breath.

The dismal singing went on. It picked up telepáthic overtones, and Parr gritted his teeth trying to block out the bubbling confusion that scattered from the drunken brain. He opened and closed his fists. Anger flared at him: the anger of impotence. For a moment, he dared to imagine the planet contaminated, the population quietly dead, the Knougs working from sheath hangers. Only for a second; but the brief thought was satisfying, even as he forced himself to agree with the strategy of the War Committee: which was to leave the planet as nearby unpoisoned as possible by even a minor land war.

Finally the song bubbled to silence. Half an hour later the bus turned on Olive Street and the gloomy-Los Angeles buildings hovered at the sidewalks. It pulled in at the Olive Street entrance of the

Hill Street Terminal and Parr got out.

He walked out of the lot and started downhill toward the Biltmore Hotel.

WHEN Parr awoke he knew that something had been added to Los Angeles during the night. He shivered involuntarily and tightened his thoughts down to the place where no fuzzy, side harmonics were possible.

He was afraid—the startled afraidness of finding something deadly underfoot. Gradually he made his body relax; gradually he quieted his twin hearts; gradually he corralled his breathing. Then he let out a wisp of thought as tenuous as mist.

And he sensed the Oholo's mind again. Very near to his own. He closed his mind quickly, waited breathlessly to see if the Oholo had detected him. His ears hummed with danger for he was within mental assault range.

There was no answering probe and after a moment he got up cautiously.

Feeling the rug beneath his bare feet made him wince with a blind associational terror which he could not immediately analyze. Then, looking down, he thought of the tickle of Tarro fur. He half expected to see the dark stains on the

rug too. Always, on Tarro fur—remembering—there were those stains. They had been a difficult people to rule. As *agent provocateur*, (that had been several years ago on Quelta) he had reason to expect blood.

He crossed to the trousers neatly folded over a chair. In the left front pocket was the comset. He fumbled it out and standing naked in the gloomy dawn, whispered: "Parr. There is an Oholo in my hotel."

After a pause the comset issued the tinny question: "Is he aware of you?" The voice filtering through the small diaphragm was without personality.

"I don't think so."

There was silence. Then: "Is he open?"

"I think . . . he is, yes."

"Find out for sure!"

The comset was cold in Parr's hand. He stood shivering. He rubbed his left hand over his naked flank.

HE tried to kill his thoughts against the command from the Advancement, tried to let the drilled in obedience take over. He opened the receptive portion of his mind as far as it would go, knowing that within seconds seepage would be as loud as thunder because he was not adept at double concentration. But even before one second had

gone he snapped his mind closed again.

The Oholo was open.

"Parr," he whispered hoarsely into the comset. "He's open."

"... He can't know we're here, then. What did you learn?"

Parr mopped his forehead with the back of his hairy arm. "I just kept receptive a second."

"Keep checking, then."

Parr let the comset fall to the chair. He walked to the window and looked out at the haze bound city. Early sunlight fought blue smog. Across the street the Pershing Square pigeons waddled self-consciously about, on the grass beside the new fountain, picking at invisible tidbits and cooing.

Parr rubbed his throat trying to massage away the inner tenseness. He was alone against the Oholo. An aloneness that he had not been prepared for. And he worried at the fear that was inside him.

He dressed with awkward fingers and left the room, his eyes darting suspiciously along the corridor as he drew the door closed behind him.

He walked quickly down the carpeted stairs and through the front doors of the hotel. Several times he glanced over his shoulder as he hurried toward Sixth Street.

After four blocks he was sure that he had not been followed. He

entered a restaurant. He ordered, reading from the menu.

He did not enjoy the meal.

AFTER eating he took a cab to the office of R. O. "Bob" Lucas, Realtor. The Advanceship had determined that Lucas was the agent for an empty warehouse on Flower Street.

Parr exposed a bulky wallet for Lucas' benefit and began to rustle bills with blunt, stubby fingers. Within minutes he had signed a six month lease.

After making an appointment for three o'clock Tuesday at the warehouse, Parr left Lucas' office and caught a cab to a typewriter shop. He purchased a Smith-Corona portable, a ream of corrasable paper, a disk eraser, and five hundred business envelopes. At the bookstore next door, he bought a United States Atlas.

After that he took a cab to the post office, had the driver wait while he rented six postal boxes under the name A. Parr and bought twenty sheets of air mail stamps.

In the cab once more, he concentrated on the city map that had been impressed electronically on his brain.

"Drive out Sixth Street," he ordered, being very careful of his enunciation.

A half dozen blocks out Sixth,

IMAGINATION

Parr located a hotel on the right side of the street. It was a reasonably safe distance from the Biltmore. He ordered the driver to stop.

The building sat atop a hill, the street before it twining briskly toward the center of town. Parr studied the building for a moment, memorizing details of architecture for reference.

Then settled with his purchases in a front room on the 3rd floor, Parr opened the Atlas to the Western United States and marked out the territory assigned to him with the heavy ink lines of his pen.

Having done that, he listed all the names of the included towns.

Then he sat down at the portable, inserted a sheet of paper and wrote:

"To the Chamber of Commerce, Azusa, California. Gentlemen: Please send me the current city directory." He looked at the postal numbers. "My mailing address is . . ." He typed in the first number on the list. ". . . Los Angeles, California. Enclosed is five dollars to defray the costs. Thanking you in advance, A. Parr."

HE studied the letter. It was a competent job of typing. He flexed his fingers, found them slightly stiff from the unaccustomed work.

He ran his eyes down the list of

towns, inserted another sheet of paper.

"To the Chamber of Commerce . . ."

He stopped typing.

He sat before the typewriter imagining the number of directories, imagining the staggering total of individual names.

He thought of the Advancement and its baffling array of machines that would automatically scan the directories and print a mailing label for each of the names. He thought of the vast number of parcels waiting to be labeled, as many as fuel requirements permitted the Ship to carry. And of the even vaster number that the synthesizer was adding out of the native resources. The smooth efficiency of the Advancement, the split second timing of the whole operation . . . And all of it auxiliary timing to the main effort. Even with superior weapons, even with complete surprise, the Knougs were taking no chances. The job of the Advancement, the job of Parr, was to demoralize the whole planet just before the invasion. To insure an already certain victory.

He turned back to the typewriter, wrote a few more words.

There was still the awareness of the enemy Oholo in the back of his mind.

He split the list of cities into six

equal groups for box numbering.

Several hours later a tenant complained about the noise of the typewriter. Parr gave the clerk fifty dollars and continued to type.

CHAPTER III

PARR spent the morning of Tuesday, D-Day minus 28, in his hotel room, reliving what seemed now to be the extremely narrow escape of the previous morning. He imagined what he *might* have done: assaulted the Oholo mentally, or struck him down with the focus pistol when he tried to leave the hotel. And having imagined the situations he proceeded to explain to himself why, instead, he had fled.

At eleven o'clock, by prior arrangement, he reported to the Ship and from it received the reassuring information that the now alerted advancemen had been able to find no other Oholo.

At noon he went out to eat and then for an hour walked the streets, studying the people and their city. Most particularly he listened for accent, intonation. He was afraid to drop his mind shield to try for telepathic contact with them.

A few minutes before three o'clock in the afternoon his cab drew up to the warehouse. The air was hot and sour smelling and

Parr was restless. The realtor was waiting for him on the sidewalk. Parr nodded curtly. The man bent clumsily and rattled keys at the lock.

"Here it is," Lucas said.

Parr walked into the warehouse.

It was an old building. Perhaps shabbier, dustier than he had expected. The air was stale and faintly chilly with decay. Remnants of packing crates, wrapping-paper, labels and twine had been heaped in a greasy pile in a far corner.

Parr sniffed suspiciously as his eyes darted around the room.

Across from him, above the rubbish, an electric box indicated that the building had at one time been industrialized at least to the extent of a few heavy power tools.

Parr walked to the stairway.

"I'll want someone to clean this mess up," he said curtly.

"Yes, sir," the realtor said.

"Tomorrow," Parr said.

"All right," the realtor said, consciously omitting the "Sir" as if to reassert his own individuality.

Parr glanced at him. "I'll send you sufficient money to cover the fee." Without waiting for an answer, he started up the stairway.

The upper two floors were in much the same condition as the first. From the third there was a narrow flight of steps slanting to the roof. Parr eyed it with disap-

proval.

"Narrow," he said.

"There's seldom any reason to go up there . . . sir."

PARR went up. At the top of the flight, he forced back the door and clambered into the shed which opened onto the roof. Parr dusted his knees. He stepped outside, and the gravelly finish grated under his shoes. The air smelled of warmed over tar.

He tugged restlessly at his chin. It was a good, substantial roof. As the listening post had reported. Good enough for pickup and delivery. He permitted himself a glimmer of satisfaction.

He heard movement behind him. Instinctively he whirled around, his hand dipping toward his right coat pocket, the memory of the Oholo—the vision of a composite Oholo face surprisingly like an Earth face—flashed across his mind. The realtor's head bobbed into view, and Parr relaxed his tense muscles.

"How is it up to here?"

Parr rumbled an annoyed and indistinct answer and turned once more to the roof. When the realtor stood at his side, Parr said, "I want that shed thing ripped off and a chute installed, next to the stairs. Have it done tomorrow."

"I'm . . ." the realtor began. But he looked at Parr's face and lick-

ed his lips nervously. "Yes, sir," he said after a moment. "Anything I can do. Glad to oblige."

"That's what I thought," Parr said, and Lucas shifted uneasily.

Parr turned to the stairs. Going down he could see dust motes flicker in the fading light at the dirty west windows.

Outside he watched the realtor lock the doors.

"Keep the keys," Parr said. "Send them to me at the Saint Paul Thursday morning. At eight o'clock."

The realtor said, "... Yes, sir."

AT six o'clock Parr was in his hotel, undressed, making preliminary arrangements by telephone to hire a fleet of trucks. He had already placed an advertisement for shipping clerks and common laborers in *The Times*: interviews Thursday from ten to four at the Flower Street warehouse.

After finishing with the truckers, he phoned four furniture companies before he found one open. He ordered it to deliver a desk and two dozen folding chairs to the Flower Street warehouse Thursday morning at nine-thirty.

All the while the Oholo was in the back of his mind, now sharp with sudden memory, now dull with continued awareness.

He checked the schedule the

Ship had given him.

He took the comset, flicked it on. "Parr, I'm scheduling. I'll need a packet of money along with the dummy bundle. Can you deliver them both to the warehouse tomorrow night?"

"We can."

"Good," Parr said, swallowing, and there was perspiration on his upper lip.

"Have you contacted the Oholo again?"

He felt his blood spurt. "Not yet," he said.

He waited.

Then: "Think you can handle him mentally?"

Parr glanced at the mirror, saw how taut his reflection was.

"I'm not very sure," he said.

"Well, physically, then?"

Parr let out his breath slowly. "I don't know."

"Try. Either way. Get rid of him. An Oholo could cause the invasion trouble."

Parr plucked nervously at his leg. "If I'm not able to?"

The comset was silent for a moment. Then the impersonal voice said, "If you are killed in the attempt, we will replace you." It paused for a reply. Receiving none it continued: "Get what information you can, even at the risk of exposure. It's too late now for them to mount a defense, and they

probably have no way to alert the natives. We want to know what he's doing there, and if there are any more on the planet."

"All right," Parr said, and he realized, gratefully, that, to the Ship, his voice would sound emotionless.

He dropped the comset. His hand was shaking.

Not so damned good. How to kill the Oholo?

HE tried to steady his nerves by remembering other planets, other times. He had faced danger before, and he was still alive. Except that before the danger had never been an Oholo. He had been Occupation, not Combat. He remembered the few captured Oholos he had seen. They died slowly when they wanted to be stubborn.

Finally he crossed to the bed and stretched out naked, relaxing slowly, knowing that the time had come to get what information he could. Muscle by muscle he began to go limp.

Slowly, very slowly, he dissolved his mind shield. When it was completely gone he began to inch out, to flutter out, concentrating with all his power a stream of receptive thought on the Oholo frequencies high up and uncomfortably shrill.

He located the mind, far away, and he began to skirt in toward it,

his own mind trembling in anticipation of the blow if he were detected.

He inched closer trying to make himself completely non-transmitive. He could feel seepage around the beam, and he shunted it to a lower frequency, holding it there, suppressed. The effort blunted his full concentration and when he finally began to get Oholo thoughts they were blurred. He picked up a scrap here, a scrap there, his body tense.

When he relaxed at last, forming his shield solidly, he was weak. He held the shield desperately, chinking it against a possible attack. None came. The Oholo was still completely unsuspecting, completely lulled by the security of its environment.

Feeling a sense of elation and a new confidence, Parr went to the comset. "Parr. Oholo report."

"Go ahead."

Parr concentrated on the wording, filling in the blank spots with his imagination. Suddenly he was conscious of an inadequacy, something elusive that he should be able to add. He wrinkled his face, annoyed. But the uncertainty refused to resolve itself into words. "His name is Lauri. He's here on a mission having to do with the natives. I got no details, but it doesn't directly concern us, I'm sure of that. There appear to be several more

on the planet. They seem to avoid cities, which accounts for the fact that advancements haven't reported them." For a moment, he almost placed his thoughts on the elusiveness, but again it escaped him. He paused, puzzled.

"We'll have the advancements warned. This may be damned inconvenient, Parr. If there are many of them."

"I couldn't get the exact number without exploring his mind. If I'd done that. I might not have been able to report afterwards."

"Go on."

"He's leaving the city in a few days. You still want . . . me to try to kill him?"

"Yes."

The Oholo, Parr could not help remembering, had as strong a mind as he had ever encountered.

WEDNESDAY morning Parr walked to the Biltmore, not hurrying, not anxious to face a free and dangerous Oholo.

At the side of the hotel he risked contact. A shutter movement of thought told him the quarry was still inside the building.

He crossed Olive at Fifth with the light and angled right into Pershing Square. He located a seat from which he could observe the entrance of the Biltmore. For one moment he considered mental as-

sault; but remembering how strong the mind was he faced he discarded that course.

He waited. He walked around the Square. The morning seemed endless.

Finally he risked another shutter of thought.

The Oholo was still there.

Noon.

He ate in a drugstore across the street.

Still there.

As the afternoon wore on, the weariness of waiting left his body and the success of the shutter contact inflamed him with confidence. He could cross the street, enter the hotel, seek out the room. But he delayed — without admitting to himself that he was still afraid.

The gloom in the air was pre-sunset, city gloom, nostalgic. He consciously dilated his pupils to accommodate the fading light, unaware now of the scurry of people on the sidewalks and the roar of the city cloaking for night amusement. Neon lights came on like cheap fire, out of the darkness, infinitely lonely.

He shifted uncomfortably. He stood up. He could wait no longer.

Then a man and woman emerged from the hotel. And he tensed. A wisp of thought, unsuspecting, floated to him on mental laughter.

The Oholo, Lauri.

He shielded his mind even tighter, scarcely thinking.

He began to amble in the direction the couple were taking, keeping to the opposite side of the street.

At Sixth they turned toward him, waited through the yellow for the green light. They crossed.

He paused, studying a Community Chest sign, his hearts pounding uncertainly. He felt a curious little probe of thought that was delicate and apologetic, as if reluctant to intrude upon anyone's privacy. It passed him by undetecting.

The man bent toward the girl, a pert blonde, and laughed in answer to something she had said. Parr watched them go by and then at a short distance swung in behind them. He touched the focus weapon in his right hand pocket, a crystal-like disk with one side tapering to a central point. It was a short-range weapon, palm aimed, fired with an equally exerted pressure on the lateral sides.

Even with his mind closed Parr could catch ripples of Oholo thought: amusement, sympathy, appreciation. For a moment he was afraid that he had been mistaken somehow, for again there was the elusiveness, an unreality he could not account for in terms of the situation.

Parr narrowed the gap between himself and his prey.

And they turned a corner. Parr crossed the street, drew still closer, in time to hear the girl say, laughing, "... slumming once before I go back."

The crowd thickened and Parr found himself sidestepping passers-by. He was almost near enough, and his hand was moist on the focus gun.

The couple turned into a cellar night club. Parr swore to himself. Taking a nervous breath, he descended the steps. He nodded to the bouncer-doorman who was leaning idly against the wall.

He stepped into the night club. He saw the man help the girl to a table.

Parr brought out his hand. His eyes were suddenly hot and beady with excitement.

On the far side of the room he saw the black lettered sign, "MEN." He would, in crossing, to it, pass directly by the Oholo's table.

As he began to move forward a woman stumbled unsteadily against him, knocking him off balance.

"Whynacha watch where ye're goin', ya . . .," she began shrilly, but, with his left hand, he brushed her out of his way. She took a half step backwards, undecided.

He turned to glare at her and under his gaze she looked away

and tugged nervously at her dress.

Parr walked swiftly toward the rest room, his every energy concentrated on his mind shield.

As he passed the table, the girl shuffled uneasily on the chair.

Without breaking stride, Parr fired the focus gun into the man's back.

He was clear of the tables when he heard, from behind, the initial surprised, "Oh!"

He had one hand on the door marked "MEN" when he felt the confusion in his mind. Automatically, he pushed open the door. A puzzling realization that something was wrong. . . .

He turned left, from the narrow corridor into the rest room proper.

And he went down to his hands and knees on the filthy tile, writhing in agony.

CHAPTER IV

The hurt, mostly, was in his brain, and he choked back a scream. He could not think. And then the outer edge of the shield began to crumble.

He concentrated. Every muscle, bone, nerve. Veins stood out on his neck. He fought. . .

He was dented by fire inside his head. Hot, lancing tongues of flame. He tried to shrink away. He whimpered, groveled. His hands fumbled uselessly. . .

She was nearly inside of him now. It was almost over. Her thoughts were like fingers rending and tearing at quivering unprotected flesh.

He struggled hopelessly, retreating under a mental assault of unendurable ferocity. His outer memory was ripped away, a section of his childhood vanished forever.

And then there was desperation in the assault wave. He could feel her trying to shake off an attempt to breach her concentration. He stiffened, relaxed, arched his body, struggled with her.

Her attack suddenly crumbled into a distracted muddle. Her concentration had been shattered.

His mind was trembling jelly, creamed with throbbing pain. But he could resist now, and slowly he forced her out.

"I'll be back!" she lashed at him. And the hate in the thought was alive. "I'll kill you for this!" Then her thoughts began slowly to fade away and her mind shield came down.

Parr shook with every muscle.

"Buddy. Buddy," someone was saying, shaking his shoulder. "You sick, huh?"

He struggled to his knee twisting his head back and forth, trying to regroup his memories. The sear places were vacant, empty, part of himself cut cleanly away.

Immediate memories not yet stored and filed seemed to be floating free, unassociated—too widely spread to have been cut out, not too widely spread to have been mixed and shuffled. He was panting as he struggled with them, capturing them, tying them down, ordering them.

Then he began to vomit.

"You drink too much? Hey, buddy, you drink too much? I guess you drink too much, maybe?"

UNDERSTANDING—half understanding—came with the words. He scrambled up the wall until he was erect. His back pressed against the vertical tile for support. He turned and staggered from the stinking rest room, his hands forcing clumsily against the walls.

In the short hallway he could hear voices.

"And when he slumped over..."

"She just sat there like she was *thinking*..."

"You see the cop shake her?"

"I thought she was gonna hit him with the ash tray."

"Well, they sure hauled her outta here!"

Parr staggered back into the night club. Eyes turned to stare at him. His head spun in nausea. He began to move leadenly toward the exit.

There was a police officer in his path.

The officer reached out to stop him, and he tried to shake the hand away from his shoulder. He tried to think, to reactivate his trained responses, knowing that he would have trouble with this man.

He muttered wordlessly.

The officer looked grim.

"Not drunk," Parr gasped. "Sick." The officer was incredulous.

Parr shook his head, and an explanation appeared from the basic psychology of the natives: a coded scrap, death-fear.

"It . . . it . . . was horrible . . . seeing him like that."

The officer hesitated.

"One minute he was alive, the next minute . . ."

"Yeah. Yeah. You better get a cab, buddy."

"Fresh air. I'll be all right, with fresh air."

Suddenly sympathetic, the officer helped him up the stairs.

Once outside the wave of sickness began to recede. Parr waited unsteadily while the officer signaled for a cab.

As he got in the cab he whispered, "Drive."

The driver looked suspiciously at his fare, but the policeman said, "He's sick, that's all. He's just sick."

The driver grunted, meshed gears.

"Where to, Mister?"

"Just drive," Parr said tonelessly, rolling down the window until he felt air hitting his face. He lay back against the seat cushions.

BALLOON-like, memories floated, rose, fell. He struggled with them. Drifting away, his hotel's name. Before he lost it, he bent forward, muttered it at the driver.

The Oholo—a female, he knew now—suddenly whispered in his mind from a distance: "You killed the wrong one, didn't you?" He struggled with his mind shield in terror, finally got it set against her. He shivered.

At the hotel, he stumbled from the cab, started in.

"Hey, Mister, what about me?" "Eh?"

"Money, Mister. Come on, pay up!"

He fumbled at his wallet, found a bill, handed it over.

In his room at last, he peeled off his suit, his underclothes.

He lay prone on the coverlette.

After hours, or what seemed hours, his mind was stable enough for hate.

He lay in the darkness hating her. Even above the instinctive fear he hated her.

He tossed in fever thinking of after the invasion when she would be captured. The last of the sickness ebbed away. His thoughts ad-

justed, found more and more stability.

Slowly he drifted toward sleep which would heal up the confusions. As he hovered in the dark of near sleep, he felt a wash of mental assault from too far away to be effective. Her thoughts tapped at his shield and he dissolved it partly to let a little defiance flash out.

"I'll get you!" she answered coldly.

And after that, he slept, healing.

HE awoke, automatically assessing the damage. It was less than he had expected. Sleep had resolved it into tiny confused compartments.

And he knew how hard it would be to keep up his shield for four weeks. There was fatigue on it already.

Then, too, there was the pressure.

A gentle insistent pressure. As if to say, "I'm here." He remembered how strong Lauri's mind was and he knew that she would be able to hold the pressure longer than he could hold the shield. Once, in training he had shielded for nearly thirteen days—but now, under the sapping of his energy by physical activity, by the multiple administrative problems, by the pressure itself . . .

He shook his head savagely.

He looked at his suit across the edge of the bed. He shuddered with

the memory of his sickness and reached for the phone to order new clothing.

And the pressure. He was going to have to learn to get used to it.

Later, he reported to the Ship, his voice fumbling and hesitant.

The answer crackled back. "She's alerted the others, you idiot! We picked up her message. There's four more of them down there."

Parr tried to think of an excuse, knowing how pointless it would be even to offer one.

"You should have used your head," the Ship continued. "What made you think the Oholo was necessarily male?"

"I . . . I don't know. I just did."

"You know what happened on Zelta when an advanceman was careless? You want that to happen here?"

"I . . ."

On Zelta? He knew it should be familiar to him. He cursed inwardly, reaching for other memories, to see how many he had lost . . . A sentence, unbidden, flashed across his mind: "Never sell an Oholo short." It was what someone had told him once. "They think differently than you do." How, he pondered confusedly, could they expect him to think like an Oholo?

"I can't think like an Oholo," he said tonelessly.

"You could . . . Never mind."

"I could? Listen, how can they be thinking, to leave a flank like this unprotected? Why didn't they take this planet into protective custody long ago? How can you *think* like that? They aren't logical. How could I know they'd let a woman . . ."

"Parr!" the Ship ordered sharply.

Parr gulped. "Sorry."

"Insurbordination on your record."

Parr clicked off the comset.

Damn! he thought angrily.

There was still the annoying pressure on his mind. "Damn you!" he thought without lowering his shield. "Damn you!" he thought again, dissolving enough of the shield to let the thought escape.

She did not answer.

There was a knock at the door.

A man with his suit.

IT was almost ten o'clock when Parr arrived at the warehouse. The windows were alive with sunshine, and through them he could see the freshly cleaned interior.

The men with the furniture were waiting, the driver angry at the delay, his assistant indifferent. Already there was a line of job applicants who shifted uneasily, eyes turned curiously upon Parr as he crossed and unlocked the warehouse doors.

Parr, one hand resting on the

knob, said to the delivery man, "Bring the stuff inside."

The driver growled and picked up a clip board from the seat. "I gotta bill here, doc. You wanna pay before I haul the stuff out?" He held out the clip board, jerking it savagely for Parr's attention.

Parr glanced at the sum. He reached for his wallet. One by one he removed the bills and handed them over to the driver. When he had met the amount there were only two bills remaining.

"Now take them inside."

"Okay, doc."

Parr went immediately to the roof. The shed had been knocked down as he had ordered, and the chute had been installed.

The two packages were lying at the top of the chute. The bundle of money and the sample, dummy parcel—both right deposited from the Ship. He picked them up.

Walking down the stairs, he peeled away the wrapper from one bundle, exposing green sheaves of currency. Back on the ground floor he put the stacks of bills on the newly arrived desk, and the dummy parcel in the drawer. He took one of the chairs, carried it to the desk and sat down.

He looked toward the door.

"You, there! At the head of the line! Come here." He was careful of his accent, realizing the necessity of impressing the waiting workers.

He was pleased to find the accent near perfect.

The woman, frail and elderly came forward hesitantly. "My name is Anne, sir."

"All right," he said, reaching for a bill from the top sheaf. "I forgot to bring a pen and paper. Take this and go get some. You may keep the change, and there'll be another bill when you get back."

Her eyes widened. "Yes, sir." She held out a wrinkled hand.

He did not need to glance toward the door again to know that an initial and important impression had been established.

After she had gone, Parr leaned back in the chair and said to the other applicants, "You may come in now."

They shuffled inside.

PARR watched them settle into chairs. As he did so, he was aware of *her*, Lauri, holding the pressure steady on his mind, and memories of last night came back. Concentrating away from them he tried to analyze his feelings toward the natives. He found a mixture of contempt and indifference.

"I'm going to say this only once," he announced crisply. "I will expect you to inform any late comers. When I have finished I will interview each of you."

He balanced his hands before him on the rim of the desk, holding

them steady. He looked around at the waiting faces. He let his mind relax, and the speech—it had been graven on his brain in the Ship—came bubbling to the surface. He searched forward along it; and he found it to be complete, untouched by his contact with the Oholo. He wrinkled his forehead and began, seeking to give the impression that each word was being carefully considered.

"I intend to hire some of you to help me sort and load packages of promotional literature. Those hired will be paid five dollars an hour."

They shuffled unbeliably. "Yeah, but when, Mister?"

Parr's mind dipped for information. "Whenever you wish to. At the beginning of every day. Will that be satisfactory?"

The listeners twisted uncomfortably, embarrassed by their doubt. "Now you're talkin'," the original critic said.

Parr cleared his throat heavily for effect. "The work day may be as long as fourteen hours, depending on the circumstances."

No questions, now.

"The literature will come already packaged and labeled. It will be delivered to the roof by helicopter, and your job will be to sort it and transfer it to trucks." He looked them over. "I will need you for approximately three weeks."

The pressure was still on his

mind, not demanding, merely present. He writhed at it inwardly. Outwardly he was, calm, his voice undisturbed.

"Hey, Mister," another of them said. "I'd like to get somethin' straight right now. You ain't havin' us to handle no explosives er somethin' dangerous like that, are you?"

It was an objection Parr had been prepared for. Scarcely thinking, he bent to the drawer and picked up the dummy parcel. He put it on the desk top.

"There is no danger. You will need no special instructions save to handle as you would normal mail. I have a sample package here." He bent over and stripped off a section of wrapping paper to permit them to see a stack of printed material.

HE rippled the dummy sheets with his thumb. "The nature of the advertising is secret for the moment, but," he lied, "this is what it looks like." He returned the bundle to the desk. "It's just paper." That was true, and he smiled faintly as he imagined the amount of disorganization mere paper would be able to accomplish. For an instant, the uncertain emotion returned as he thought of the invasion fleet, rushing communicationless through hyperspace for its rendezvous with Earth.

"There is, of course, a reason for the high wages," he said, the words

coming automatically. "We want to hit the market before—ah—" and the phrase and the hesitation were memorized, calculated for effect, "a competitor."

He pursed his lips speculatively. "Naturally we want to avoid publicity. Anyone violating this requirement will be dismissed immediately."

He seemed to study the faces individually, looking for spies from the rival company.

"I will probably not require you for more than a few hours the first several days. In that event, you will receive pay for a full eight-hour day."

He stopped talking, and the applicants' faces were excited.

"As soon as the woman returns with the paper, I will begin the interviews. Those of you whom I hire will receive a fifty-dollar bonus before you leave the building."

When she returned, Parr interviewed. His questions were perfunctory. By noon, he had enough workers, and he had one of them hang out a penciled sign reading: "Jobs Filled." After that, he closed the doors and assembled them before him.

"If you'll form a line, I'll give you your bonuses. Give me your names to check against my list. You will sign a sheet of paper here in receipt. I've hired enough people to take care of any of you who do

not choose to come back tomorrow, so there will be no further vacancies and no chance to collect a second bonus . . . Report for work at nine o'clock tomorrow morning. At that time, I'll have someone here to fill out the necessary government employment forms for each of you."

Sitting at his desk, he began to count out the bills into neat little stacks. After each applicant had signed, he pushed a stack toward him.

After that he spent the afternoon making further arrangements with truckers and locating a woman to handle the employment records of his workers. He even had time to purchase some extra clothing and buy a few personal articles.

As night fell, while he lay comfortably naked on his hotel bed, he felt the pressure on his mind begin to fluctuate subtly.

CHAPTER V

THE Oholo, Lauri. Strong minded, yes. But untrained.

And realizing this, Parr smiled, for it testified to the certainty of his superiority, a superiority he should have recognized from the beginning. He was dealing with an amateur, an Oholo who had never received even the most elementary instruction in individual tactics.

What she was doing now was glaringly obvious to a professional:

cruising the town in an attempt to locate him. But in contacting his shield by focusing the pressure, directionally, she failed to realize that the space variations would not only tell her of his location but also inform him of her movements.

Cautiously Parr began the defensive procedure. Step by step he engaged the pressure with his mind, rather than letting it rest on his shield. Then he began to counteract the distance pulsations—strengthening, weakening, presenting a continual pressure against her questing thoughts, compensating for her movements.

But in a very short time she realized what had happened. She altered the pressure sharply. A split second later he joined it again. The advantage was still his. She altered once more. He followed suit. Check.

He could almost feel her angry confusion. Then after a moment she let the pressure fall into a rhythmic pattern. A lullaby of montony that was the result of concentration rather than of the distance variations. He knew what to expect and after fifteen minutes it happened. She broke the rhythm suddenly and tried to plunge inward, to center on him before he could counter. He had not been lulled, however, and she accomplished nothing. He met the assault easily.

The rhythmic pattern returned. Every few minutes she broke the pattern and tried to plunge in again. But his mental screen absorbed the shock.

She was persistent.

Finally Parr grew weary of it—then vaguely annoyed—then exasperated.

When he was thoroughly uncomfortable she tried another swift change of tactics. She began to increase the pressure, slowly, inexorably—stronger and stronger against his defense. He blocked her, held, retreated, held again, keeping the shield in readiness. Shortly, perspiration stood on his forehead. Abandoning the defensive he fought back against her.

But she blocked him; they locked in a deadly mental tension of spiraling energy that weakened Parr with each passing second.

SHE held the tension longer than he would have thought possible. And when it eased, it vanished, leaving his mind uncontacted. Instead of relaxing, he formed his shielding, expecting a sudden assault.

None came. Instead, the gentle insistent pressure returned, undiminished by her efforts. She was stationary now; the pressure was steady.

His body had been tense for a

long time. It ached, and he was physically exhausted. His hand shook a little as he brushed at his leg, waiting for the space variations to begin again.

They did not.

But the initial confidence—generated by the realization of her inexperience—was no longer so bright.

The very pressure itself now was an emotional drain and he wanted to lower the mind shield and relax completely. But even at a distance a mental assault would sting like a slap, like a cut, like disinfectant in a raw wound.

Under the strain, sleep was lost. Instead there was uneasiness.

He tried to ignore it. He forced himself to remember his home village. It had been a long time since he had thought of it, and at first it was difficult. But after a while, memories began to open up with nostalgia: the clumsy citizens with their mute opposition to the Empire, a *jehi* farmer who had once addressed his class on planetism and afterwards been shot, the smell of the air, the look in people's eyes, night . . . the stars . . .

The stars were cold and bright and far away. Imposing symbols of Empire.

His mind turned comfortingly on that, and his planet seemed dwarfed and unimportant. The Empire, with its glittering capital system,

the sleek trade arteries . . . the purposeful masses of citizens . . . the strength and power of it, the essential rightness of it. Something you could feel in the air about you and smell and see. It was a thing to be believed in, to be lost in, to surrender yourself to.

It was strong, crushing opposition, rolling magnificently down the stream of time—splintering, shattering, destroying, absorbing, growing hungry and eternal. He was part of it, and its strength protected him. It was stronger than everything. There could be no doubt about Empire.

But a single Oholo was strong, too.

He stirred restlessly on the bed, unable to dissect out the thing that bothered him when he thought of the Empire. His thoughts had run the full cycle, and they were back where they had started.

It seemed for a moment as if his mind were a shiny polished surface, like an egg floating beneath his skull, hanging on invisible threads of sensation that ran to the outside world.

The room was full of moonlight.

WITH fascination he studied the wall paper, a flower design scrawled repetitiously between slightly diagonal lines of blue. He concentrated on the rough texture of the paper, let his eyes drift

down to where the paper met the cream siding, revealing twin rifts of plaster. A thin line of chalk-like dust had fallen on the wood of the floor. The edge of the rug, futilely stretching for contact with the wall, curled fuzzily.

A faint breeze fluttered the half drawn blinds, puffed the lace curtains, rippled in to his bed and body.

He was guilty of something.

He wrinkled his face, puzzled. What was he guilty of?

No answer, and the moon went behind a cloud, bringing depression and acute loneliness, sharp and bitter. A depression bleak in its namelessness, and terrifying.

Then suddenly his mind jerked away from the thoughts.

He realized he was not countering the Oholo's movements. The steady pressure was a compensated pressure, varying as her distance. A projection requiring mental ability he could never hope to equal. She had learned fast. She had neatly sidestepped his defense. Terrified, he probed beyond his shield, and for an instant received an impression of her distance. He sat upright, shivering. She had worked much nearer. In desperation, he launched an assault, closing his eyes, forgetting everything else.

Lightly she parried him and slapped back strongly enough to make him wince.

Then for two long hours they fought. He grappled with the pressure, working on the theory that it was a burden no mind could carry indefinitely.

But she did not concede. Instead she continued, giving up trying to come closer, intent on breaking down his will to resist. He checked her with all his energy. He countered, stared at the scattered moonlight on the rug.

Energy drained from him until he wanted to scream, to plead with her. And beyond the bleak reality of concentration he knew that she was using twice as much energy as he was.

Then she began to weaken. The pressure steadied, and he could feel her exhaustion. She was through for the night.

The sheets of the bed were damp. His body trembled. He wanted to whimper pathetically in fancied defeat.

Sleep slowly came, and the long pervasive influence of Empire, the influence visible in concrete form on conquered planets, swept over him.

But somehow he was guilty of something, he knew . . .

HE was still tired when he awoke, instantly alert, wary. She apparently still slept, although she held the pressure against his mind.

Dawn ushered in a cloudy day,

and street noises—cars, trolleys, movement—came into the room with the utmost clarity.

He would have to change hotels. That alone had an urgency to it. Wearily he fumbled with his shield. It was still solid. He ran a hand over his forehead, pressing against the temples.

He thought of the sleeping Oholo. He dropped the shield completely, knowing she would realize its absence. He stretched mentally for a long, precious second, and it was with infinite relief.

"Hello," he leered in the direction of Lauri. "Hello," he snarled suddenly, tingling with excitement.

No answer.

"Hello! Hello! Hello!"

He shielded, and hatred of her and of all Oholos—inbred hate, overcame him. It brought an almost pathological bravado with it. The destructive drive for revenge was a surge within him. He dropped the shield and thought to her, slow and gloatingly, of the things in store for her when she was safely disarmed and helpless. And he permitted his hate to leap and caress her, and the details of the torture were etched in passion acid.

After a while, he could feel her shudder at the thoughts, and he simpered. She seemed to lie helpless, stunned under him, spurring him to greater imaginative excesses.

Then she struck out blindly, a shivering blow that caught him unaware between the eyes like a swung club.

HE shielded. Instantly he felt the guilt of last night. He was angry at himself, as if he had acted without really wanting to, as a Knoug was supposed to act. And he snarled a curse.

The maddening, uncompromising pressure returned. Implacable. Patient. Unanswerable. Pressure that would drive him insane if he had no eventual hope of release. He shuddered, and the sense of depression—the night sense—was even more dark and terrible in daylight.

He got out of bed, reported to the Advancship, keeping his voice low and even.

"Parr. Scheduling."

"Check."

The voice from the Ship was a stabbing, accusing voice. A voice that *knew*, that had made, overnight, a secret and awful discovery about him. He wanted to grovel before it and plead for forgiveness. . . .

Nonsense!

He licked his lips nervously.

"That damned female!" he shrieked.

"Eh?"

"That damned female, don't you see!"

"Parr, what's wrong? Listen, Parr, are you all right down there?"

Suddenly he relaxed. "Nothing. Nothing's wrong."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes," he said. "I'm just a little nervous."

HE ordered the driver to stop. The building was columned, red brick, decayed. The sidewalk before it was grimy, littered, cracked, chipped. Listlessly, people shuffled down the street, flecks from the vortex of humanity farther uptown drifting in the backwater of the city. Faded overalls, jeans, thin unpressed cheap suits, frayed shirts and crumpled soggy collars. Faces—lean, hollow, blotched; eyes that were harried, red, tired. The women, still trying to retain the snap of movement, were like wind-up toys, almost run down.

Parr grunted at the smells of the area, and straightening up to pay the driver, noticed distastefully the slack faces, defeated eyes and shuffling steps.

Then he knew: here, pressing in from all sides was reassurance. He watched a haggard face, felt pity, shook off the emotion as unworthy but still felt it. He could understand the haggard face. But distaste returned again, for he was superior to the face. He blocked off his mind, refusing to consider the natives any longer. . . .

He took a room inside the dingy, wasted building. He hung his extra

suit in the closet. The wall was greyish with cracking plaster and water stains, half hidden by the dim light; the rug underfoot was threadbare and stale. On the dresser, a Gideon Bible, nearly new.

The sheets, he discovered upon turning back the bed, were dingy and yellowish. The mattress sagged in the middle and the metal bedstead was chipped and dented.

After he was settled he reported to the Advancement, told of his new location and the reason for it.

On his way out of the hotel he was conscious of the guilt again, and in the street, he stopped an old man who wore a tobacco stained shirt and gave him several of the bills from his wallet. Bribing helplessness made him feel better.

Back in the hotel that evening, renewed confidence came as he thought how clever he had been to choose such a location; he thought of the Oholo searching across town, her mind automatically rejecting this location. It would take her more than one night to find him.

But her mind did not seek contact with his; instead, the pressure remained annoyingly general.

She was making no attempt to locate him.

He stared out the window at the pale reflection of neon from the sidewalk. She was not even moving yet.

He waited, suddenly nervous.

When she finally began to move she still kept the pressure general.

He checked her position and after an instant met opposition that scattered his thoughts. But in that space of contact he knew she had moved closer.

In terror he drew his shield in tight.

SUSPENSE mounted in his mind. He counted his pulse beats, quieting himself. He tried to relax. Then fearfully checked her position again. That involved receiving a sharp slap of assault, for she had been ready with an almost trigger response.

And she was closer. She seemed to be advancing confidently.

In nervous haste he began to dress.

And then she struck with her full hellish power from very near at hand.

Amazement and abject fear flamed in his mind. He fought to strengthen the shield. She forced it back, got a single hot tentacle of thought through into his mind proper, and it lashed about like a living thing before he could force it out.

Gradually he came to realize that she was not near enough for the kill.

He staggered to the door, his mind numbed and spinning as if a

giant explosion had gone off by his ear.

And then, somehow, he was in the street, half-dressed. Somehow he managed to find a cab. It was all a blur to him that might have taken two minutes, five minutes, or twenty minutes. She had abandoned the assault. She was moving closer.

Then, before the cab began to move he saw her. Two blocks away. Coming toward him. Her face was impassive, but even at a distance, the eyes . . . or was it his imagination? The focus gun . . . in his pocket . . . The cab drew away. He leaned out the window, twisting back, tried to aim at her. The shot, silent and lethal, sped away. The distance was too great.

Then a new assault, but it was too late. He held it until the cab outdistanced it. She renewed the pressure and he could think again. And he knew, in the back of his mind, that soon now they would meet. And he shuddered, wondering of the outcome.

HE was sick. Unbelievably, she had outguessed him. She had guessed he would flee away from the obvious to the other extreme.

His breathing was hoarse and painful, and he thought comfortingly of his home planet; a small planet with a low sky; incredibly blue, a trading station far removed from Earth, satisfyingly deep in

the Empire. As a boy he had often gone to the space port to watch the ships. He remembered how he had stood watching their silvery beauty and their naked violence. He had always been very excited by them. Always. And they were a symbol of Empire.

After the cab driver had spoken to him several times he roused himself to say, "A hotel, any hotel."

It was luck he knew, that he had been beyond effective range. She might have guessed the correct slum hotel and stood below his window.

His mind was foggy and befuddled.

And he had been hurt. Much more than mentally hurt. More than physically hurt. He wanted to hurt something in return. Only now he was too tired.

He relaxed in the seat, listened to the hiss of tires. He would be able to sleep tonight. She could not figure out his next move, predicted on random selection.

In his new hotel room he found that his body stung and itched.

And she began to search for him.

He had to fight her for more than an hour, and after that he slept, subconsciously keeping his shield on a delicate balance.

CHAPTER VI

THE next day Parr went first to the post office and from there

immediately to the warehouse. He brought with him three manila envelopes containing three city directories, the first responses to his requests. He took them to the roof, checked the three cities off his list, placed the directories at the base of the chute. Later the helicopter would come swishing down from the night sky, collect them, and return tomorrow evening with the compressed and labeled parcels, one to a family, stamped with the requisite postage. The parcels, spilling out of the compressor, would expand to a huge jumbled heap for the natives to handle. And Parr knew he was only one of many advancement men. The cargoes would nightly spew to all points of the Earth from the Advancement ship slowly circling the globe behind the sun.

Complete coverage was what the Knougs were aiming at. Here advancement men were using the government postal system for distribution; there, making arrangements for private delivery; elsewhere, setting up booths. Earth had been scouted very thoroughly by four prior Intelligence expeditions. It was an inconceivably complex network of planning, possible only through extreme specialization in an organization made frictionless by obedience.

THAT night Lauri's pressure increased—or seemed to—and he

shook his head like a hooked fish. He began to walk faster, mumbling under his breath.

The solution, he knew, was distance. A partial solution only, for he was bound by assignment to commuting range, not great enough to permit him to lose her completely.

The jangle and clank of a city train roused him. An interurban trolley. It was stopped at the next corner accepting passengers.

He turned and ran the quarter block to board it.

As he rode toward the ocean he could feel the gradual lessening of the pressure; it was a lessening not nearly as pronounced as he would have felt were she trying to center on him as he fled, but sufficient to relax him. He could feel a puzzled pressure shift after a few miles as she checked him briefly, then an over excessive spurt of questing thought which he countered automatically. Even if he only remained shielded it would take her at least a week to localize him except in a very general direction.

He began to feel all of the overcharged tenseness drain out of his muscles. He even began to take an interest again in his surroundings, studying the buildings with appreciation. The incongruity of the architecture was more apparent than before, due to his greater acquaintance with the thought patterns of

the natives.

A bizarre sight: a temple in the style of the Spanish, low-roofed, unpretentious, comfortably utilitarian with no nonsense except for the gleaming gold minaret atop it, its coiled surface outlined with neon tubing.

It drifted away, behind.

Here a huddled shop, antique-filled and sedate, less than a block from a brilliant drive-in in disk form, radially extending like a somnolent spider.

And most paradoxical of all, the false glamor of signs encouraging the spectator to rub shoulders with excitement that was supposed to be inside the door, but wasn't. For people who were incapable of finding it anywhere. Parr felt suddenly sad.

Odd natives, he thought. But even odder thoughts for a Knoug, he knew. Then he felt the savage stirrings inside of him again. It brushed away sadness. The numbered days until the invasion excited him. The emotional surge of danger and trial and obedience were the preludes to the necessary relief.

Parr felt fully relaxed.

HE got off the trolley in Santa Monica, where the night fog was already fingering in from the ocean.

He crossed the wide street, angled toward the Mira Mar hotel.

In his room he stood looking out across the street over the stretch of park that broke suddenly as a dull cliff, dropping jaggedly to the road beneath. Beyond were buildings unusually small and squalid in sea perspective. The beach, curving north to Malibu; and the sea itself was overshadowed toward the Ocean Park Pier by the brazen glitter of red neon.

But the fog was quieting the scene, and isolating it. After a bit there was no world beyond the window but the grey damp world of fog.

Still the excitement beat at him. He projected his thoughts beyond the immediate future to the bright burning of the Oholo System, the atomic prairie fire skipping from sun to sun at the core, leaving the planets ashes—while isolated, the periphery worlds would one by one capitulate to Knoug power, to Knoug *will*, and become infected with Destiny.

Beyond that?

The doubt came, and he cringed mentally.

He was guilty of something.

His hands whitened on the sill, and staring into the fog he tried to bring all of the weight of Empire to his support.

But there was the memory of revolt by Knougs themselves on a tiny, distant moon.

The depression came back.

... It took the Oholo four nights to locate him.

CHAPTER VII

THE strain on his face—the heaviness of his eyes—the taut lines of his throat. His body was exhausted.

Like dripping water the pressure pounded at him.

The night before, she had found him at Long Beach.

He cast off the depression to find euphoria; and the two alternated steadily with increasing peaks.

His hands were nervous. Blunt thumbs constantly scrubbed blunt fingertips in despair or anticipation.

... The trucking had all been arranged for.

The deliveries from the Ship occurred nightly. He had sent follow-up letters to cities who had not responded to his first request. The answers had finally arrived.

The warehouse, floor by floor, was filling. Already some trucks were waiting.

There was the continual bump of handled packages sliding from the chute, being sorted, being stacked. But worries piled up inside of him: fears of an accident, a broken package, a suspicious employee, a fire . . . The Oholo, the guilt, the depression.

Eagerly now he listened to the general information report from the

Ship. Most advancements were on schedule. No irreparable accidents. Certain inaccessible areas had been written off. A few advancements recalled for necessary Ship duty. One killed, replaced, in Germany. World coverage estimated at better than seventy per cent in industrial and near industrial areas, a coverage probably exceeding the effective minimum—short only of the impossible goal.

He had been talking to a trucker in front of him without really hearing his own words, his fingers and thumbs rubbing in increased tempo.

He hated the man as he hated everyone in the building, everyone on the planet.

The trucker shrugged. "I'll have to deadhead back. That has to go in the bill, too."

"All right," Parr snapped irritably. "Now, listen. This is the most important thing. Each of the lots has to be mailed at the proper time. Your bonus is conditional on that."

"Okay," the trucker said.

"I can't overstress the importance of that," Parr said. He handed the slip of paper across the table. It was a list of mailing information; Ship compiled, that was designed to assure that the packages would all be distributed by the mails as near simultaneously as possible.

"You deliver the Seattle lot,

that's number, ah, eighteen on the list, the last."

"I understand."

"When your trucks are loaded, you may leave. I'll pay you for lay-over time."

"I've got a bill here," the trucker said.

The two huddled over it, and after the trucker had gone Parr leaned back staring at the ceiling, his nerves quivering.

HE knew what he was guilty of, at last. Knowledge came suddenly, from nowhere like an electric shock, and it stunned him. Logically he demanded proof; but there was no proof. It came, it was; it was beyond logic. Nothing in his memory . . . and for a moment he thought he had lost the memory under Lauri's first vicious assault ripping into his mind; but, and again without reason, he knew it was not in the memory she had destroyed. She was connected with it, but not like that . . . He was guilty of treason. He could not remember the act, but he was guilty. What? When? Why? He did not know; he was guilty without knowing what the treason was: only the overpowering certainty of his guilt. Wearily he let his head droop. Treason . . .

"Mister Parr?"

"Eh? Eh?"

"There's somethin' heavy in this one. It don't feel like paper. I think

it's metal of some sort. Now, look, Mister Parr, I don't want to get tied up with somethin' that's not square. You said all these packages had paper in them. And I'd kinda like to see what else there is in this one, Mister Parr, if you don't mind."

Parr wanted to jump out of the seat and smash at the man's face. But he forced himself to relax.

"You want to open the package, is that it?" he said, gritting his teeth.

"Yes, Mister Parr."

" . . . Then go ahead and open it."

Having expected refusal, the worker hesitated.

"Go ahead," Parr insisted. He kept his face expressionless, although, beneath desk top level, his hands bunched into knobby fists, white at the knuckles.

Then at the last possible second, as the worker's fingers were fumbling at the wrapping, Parr leaned forward. "Wait a minute. It won't be necessary to waste the parcel . . . Unless you insist."

The worker looked at Parr uncomfortably.

A question of timing. Events hung in a delicate balance between exposure and safety. Parr reached for the drawer of the desk, his movements almost too indifferently slow.

His hand fumbled inside the

drawer. "I think I have some of the metal samples around here," he said. His hand found the stack of gleaming dummy disks, encircled it possessively. He tossed them carelessly on the desk top and one rolled, wobbling, to the edge and fell to the floor.

PUZZLED, the worker bent to the one that had fallen, picked it up, turned it over in his hand, studying it curiously.

"I don't see . . .," he said suspiciously.

"That's our product," Parr lied. "We include some in every hundred or so bundles. The literature explains their function."

The worker shook his head slowly.

"As you can see," Parr persisted gently, "they're perfectly harmless." He tensed, waiting.

" . . . Yeah, uh . . . I think I get it. Something like them hollow cement bricks they use to cure people of rheumatism with, huh?"

Parr swallowed and relaxed. "That's the general idea. You'll see . . . Well, if you want to, go ahead and open the parcel."

"Naaaah," the man said foolishly. " . . . There wouldn't be no sense in doin' that."

Beneath the desk top again, his hands coiled and flexed in anger and hatred. "I want your name," Parr said, a very slight note of

harshness in his voice.

The worker let his eyes turn to the backs of his heavy hands, guiltily. "Look, Mister Parr, I didn't mean . . ."

Parr silenced him with an overdrawn gesture. "No, no," he said, his voice normal and conciliatory. "I meant, we might be able to use a man like you in our big plant in the East." He snarled inwardly at himself for the unnecessary note of harshness before: it was too soon for that.

Suddenly stammering with excitement, the worker said, "My name's George . . . George Hickie . . . George Hickie, Mister Parr. I got good letters from back home about my workin', sir."

"Where do you live, George?"

"Out on Bixel . . . Just up from Wilshire, you know, where . . ."

"I meant the number of the house, George."

"Oh." George told him.

Parr wrote it down. "George Hickie, uh-huh."

"I'll be mighty obliged, Mister Parr, if you'll keep me in mind."

"Yes. Well. Good afternoon, Hickie. You ought to be getting back to your work now, hadn't you?"

And when the worker had half crossed the room, Parr drew a heavy, black line through the name. He had memorized it.

The pencil lead broke under the

pressure.

And at that moment, the pressure in his mind vanished.

In automatic relief, he relaxed his shielding for the first time in what seemed years, and before he could rectify the error Lauri hit him with everything she had, catching him just as the shield began to reform.

PAIN roared in his mind. From the force of the blow he knew that she must be near the warehouse.

It had been one quick thrust, leaving his mind throbbing and he sobbed in impotent hate and anger.

The pressure was back.

And slowly and surely she was closing in on him, compensating. She had struck prematurely, realized her mistake, and was narrowing the range, holding the final assault until assured of victory.

He stood up weakly and hurried to the door, brushing through a group of startled workers.

Outside, a cab was cruising, and Parr ran after it. It did not stop. He turned and ran frantically in the opposite direction, rounded the corner, still running, his heels thudding on the hot pavement.

He ran for blocks, the blood pounding in his head, sweat trickling into his eyes. Pedestrians turned to stare, looking back along his line of flight.

When Parr stopped, finally, he was trembling. He stared at his own hands curiously and then he looked around him.

He swallowed hard. The world swam, steadied. His chest rose and fell desperately . . .

At the airport, he phoned the warehouse.

"Hickle? Get me Hickle . . . Hello, Hickle, this is Parr. Listen, Hickle, are you listening? Hickle, I've got to leave town for two days. You've got to run things. You understand? Listen. I've left money in the drawer of my desk . . . for the pay roll . . . You know how to run things, don't you, Hickle? . . . Now, listen, Hickle, there's some trucking . . . wait a minute . . . Look . . . You stay down there. Right there. I'll phone you back, long distance, later. Don't go away, Hickle. Wait right there. I'll tell you what you've got to do."

The last call for his plane came over the loudspeaker.

"Listen, Hickle, I've got to run. I'll phone you later, so wait. Wait right there, Hickle!"

OVER Bakersfield, gratefully—infinitely gratefully—he felt the last wisp of pressure vanish.

He was free.

There was no consequence powerful enough to keep him from dropping his mind shield entirely. But he let it come down slowly,

barrier by barrier, enjoying the release, prolonging the ultimate freedom beyond.

At last the roar of the motors, muffled, sang in his head like an open song, and there was nothing between his thoughts and the world.

His mind stretched and trembled and pained from the stress, and quivered and fluttered and pulsed and throbbed and vibrated and rejoiced.

He looked out over the wing, through the whirring propellers, at the hazy horizon, at the cloudless sky, bright and blue and infinite.

It was the best day he had ever known. It was freedom; and he had never known it before.

His mind was infinitely open as the sky above the clouds, and he stretched it out and out until he forced the limit, beyond which no mind may go, yet wanting to plunge on.

In the east, there was the dusk of night coming down, a cloak pulled up from the other side of the world by the grapple hooks of dying sunshine.

In San Francisco he phoned Hickie in Los Angeles, a man and a place so far removed that he wanted to shout to make himself heard over the telephone.

Then to a hotel—but now as a place of rest and refuge, not a symbol of flight and fear. His hate returned, beautiful, now, flower-like,

delicate, to be enjoyed. To be tasted, bee-like, at his leisure.

The city outside was a whirl of lights and the lights hypnotized him with their magic. Soon he was in the streets.

There were cabs and scenes: laughter, love, death, passion—everything rolled into a capsule bundle for him. The city spread out below in a fabric of light, the hazy blue of cigar smoke closely pressing sweaty bodies, laughing mouths. A swirl of sensations.

"Somewhere else!" he cried madly to a driver.

China Town, The International Settlement, Fisherman's Wharf . . . The cabbies knew a tourist.

HE had been moving for hours, and now he was tired and lost, and he could not find a cab to get back to the Sir Francis Drake.

A girl and a sailor passed. A tall lithe blonde with a pert nose and high cheek bones and brown eyes heavy lips and free hips . . . a . . . blonde.

The Oholo . . . Lauri . . . was a blonde.

He began to cast up memories of her, sickeningly, making his fists clench.

He wanted a blonde to smile at him, unsuspecting. A blonde with honey colored hair and a long, slim throat with a blue vein in it, so he could watch the heart beat. He

wanted to hurt the blonde, and hold her, and caress her softly, and . . . most of all, hurt her.

He wanted to shake his fists at the sky and scream in frustration.

He wanted to find a blonde . . .

Finally he found one. In a small, red-fronted bar, dimly lit. She was sitting at the end of the bar, facing the door, toying with a tall drink, half empty, from which the ice had melted.

"What'll it be, Mister?"

"Anything! Anything!" he said excitedly as he slipped behind a table, his eyes still on the woman at the bar.

"And the same for me?"

"Sure. Sure."

She brought back two drinks, picked up a bill, turned it over in her hand speculatively. She wore an off the shoulder dress, and high rouge on her Mexican cheeks. She made change from her apron, putting the money beside the second glass, sitting down in front of it, across from him.

Still he had not noticed her.

Two patrons entered. They moved to a table in the far corner near the Venetian blinds of the window and began to talk in low husky voices.

"I'll be back, dearie," the woman across from Parr said, sipping her drink, smearing the glass rim in a veined half moon.

She went to serve the girls.

When she came back Parr had brushed away the drink from in front of him.

"Listen, dearie," she said. "You got troubles?"

He grunted.

She snaked an ample hand half across the table and wiggled her shoulders to show off her breasts. "I bet I know what's wrong with you. Same as a lotta men, dearie. Want a little fun, I bet."

"Bring me that blonde," he said hoarsely.

"Listen, dearie, you don't want her. What you want . . ."

"The blonde!"

RELUCTANTLY she stood up, frightened by his tone. She put a hand over his change, waited.

He did not notice.

She put the money into her apron pocket, heaving her chest.

Then she got the blonde.

"You wanna buy me a drink, honey?" the blonde said.

"Sit down!"

The blonde turned to the Mexican. "Make it a double." She sat down.

"Talk!"

"Whatdaya wan' me to say, honey?"

"Just talk." He had seen the pulse in the vein in her neck. The neck was skinny, and the face was pinched, lined with heavy powder. Her eyes were weary, and her thin

hands moved jerkily.

"Just talk."

When she saw his wallet, as he brought it out to pay, she said, "Maybe we oughtta go somewhere to talk." Her voice was flat and nasal, and she tossed her head. She ruffled her coarse dirty-colored hair with an automatic gesture.

Parr wanted to kill her, and his hands itched at the delicious thought.

But not tonight. Not tonight. He was too tired. He . . . tonight he just wanted to think about it. And then he wanted to sleep and rest and think.

She tossed off the drink. "Another one, Bess," she said shrilly, glancing at him.

He took two bills out of his wallet, two twenties, put them on the table, pushed one of them toward her without looking at it.

She drank two more shots quickly, eagerly, hungrily, as if there was need to rush through them and get them safely inside.

She leaned across the table, her eyes heavy. "I'm gonna talk, okay? Man wants to hear woman talk. Get yer kicks like that, okay. You're buyin' . . . Hell, I bet you think I'm a bad girl. I'm not a bad girl—bad girl." Her hands twitched drunkenly below her flat breasts. "There was a sonofabitch in my town . . . I came from up north, Canada." She drank again,

hastily. "I could go for you, know what? . . . I'm getting drunk, that's what. Fooled ja, didn't I? Listen. You wouldn't believe this, but I can cook. Cook. Like hell. Wouldn't think that, eh? Hell, I'm good for a lotta things. Like being walked on. Jever wanna wanna—walk on a girl? Listen. I knew a guy, once . . ."

Parr said, "Shut up!" For one instant, there was sickness and revulsion, and desire to comfort her, but it vanished almost before it was recognized.

She closed her mouth.

He pushed the twenty dollar bill into her lap.

"You be here tomorrow. Tomorrow night."

"Okay."

"You be here tomorrow night."

"Sure, sure, honey."

"You be here tomorrow night, and don't forget it."

She smiled drunkenly. "I'm here . . . most nights, honey . . ."

"You be waiting for me."

"I'm always . . . waitin', honey. Ever since I remember, honey, waitin. Just waitin, honey."

But the next morning, when Parr awoke, Lauri was trying to center on his open mind. She was in San Francisco, looking for him.

The depression came back, and the guilt—the knowledge of treason—that made him want to go to a mirror and stand, watching blood

trickle down his face in cherry rivulets like tears.

And fear.

When he shielded, she resumed the pressure.

AT noon he was back in Los Angeles. Perspiration was under his skin, waiting icily.

He went directly to the warehouse.

Hickle, in surprise, crossed the room to him. "Mister Parr!" he said.

The right corner of Parr's mouth was twitching nervously. "Get a chair. Bring it to the desk."

When Hickle was seated before him, Parr said, "Okay. I've got some papers. I'm going to explain them to you." He got them out. "They're all alike in form. Here." He took off the top sheet and Hickle stood up to see. "This number, here, is for the truck unit." He circled it and scribbled the word "truck." "This number." He circled it. "This number is the lot number. You see, truck number nine has lots seventeen, twenty-seven, fifty-three, thirty-one."

"I get it," Hickle said.

Parr's body was trembling and he threw out a tentative wave of thought probing for the Oholo, afraid that she might come silently, knowing his approximate daytime location. He began to talk rapidly, explaining.

It was D-Day minus seven.

After fifteen minutes, he was satisfied that Hickle understood the instructions.

"There was a plain bundle this morning?"

Yes, sir. I wondered about that."

"Get it."

Hickle got it.

Parr opened it. "Pay roll money, trucker money. Give the truckers their money when they give you their bills. I'm going to trust you, Hickle."

Hickle gulped. "Yes, sir."

Parr began to stuff money into his wallet.

She was in Los Angeles. He knew by the pressure on his mind.

"I've got to hurry. Listen. I want you to keep the workers here as long as necessary, hear? This schedule's got to be kept. And you take a thousand dollars. And listen, Hickle. This is just chicken-feed, remember that, when you're working for us."

"Yes, sir!"

He had her located, keeping his mind open to try to center on her.

HE could center on her! She was only partially shielded, and she made no protest. She was not moving, and he could . . . except that there was something wrong with the pressure. He was overlooking something. But she was

not moving. Not yet.

"I've got to talk fast. All these final deliveries. You'll be busy. If you need help, hire it. And listen, I'll be here from time to time if I can."

"There's something wrong, Mister Parr?"

Parr searched for an excuse. "It's personal . . . my wife, yes, my wife, it's . . ." He wondered why he had used that one. It had sprung automatically to his mind. "Never mind. I'll phone in from around town. I'll try to help you all I can by phone."

She was not moving, but the pressure seemed different . . . *alien!*

He jerked out of his seat, kicking the chair over as he headed for the door.

A different Oholo!

There were two of them in Los Angeles!

He probed out.

Lauri was almost on top of him.

He skidded through the door, into the street, knocking a startled man out of his path.

He stared wildly in both directions. Several blocks away a cab was stalled with a red light.

And almost before him, a private car was headed uptown. With three huge leaps he was on the running board, yanking the door open.

He jerked himself in beside the

frightened driver.

He twisted his head, shouting. "Emergency! Hospi . . ."

She had seen him trying to escape. She struck.

In the street, a flock of English sparrows suddenly faltered in flight, and one plunged blindly into the stone face of a building. The others circled hysterically, directionless, and two collided and spilled to the ground.

"Hurry, damn it!" Parr moaned at the driver. "Hurry!"

He slammed forward into the windshield, babbling.

The terrified driver stepped down on the accelerator. The car leaped forward.

Parr, fighting with all his strength, was twisted in agony, and blood trickled from his mouth.

He gasped at the driver: "Cab. Behind. Trying to kill me."

The driver was white-faced and full of movie chases and gangster headlines of shotgun killings, typical of Southern California. He had a good car under him, and he spun the wheel to the right, cutting into an alley; to the left, onto an intersecting alley; to the right, into a crosstown street; then he raced to beat a light.

He lost the cab finally in a maze of heavy traffic at Spring.

Parr was nearly unconscious, and he struggled desperately for air.

Run, run, run, he thought des-

pairingly, because two Oholos are ten times as deadly and efficient as one . . .

CHAPTER VIII

D-DAY minus four. General mailing day.

Parr, his mind fatigued, his body tense, phoned the warehouse twice, and twice received enthusiastic reassurances behind which he could hear the hum and clatter of parcels being moved, trucks being loaded . . . cursing and laughing and subdued shouting.

How many hours now? His mind was clogged and stuffy and sluggish. An hour's sleep, ten minutes sleep—any time at all. If it could be spent in clear, cold, *real* sleep.

Eat, run. Always, now, he was running, afraid to stop longer than a few minutes. He needed time to *think*.

And the pressure was steady.

Get away. Leave Los Angeles!

"Parr, Parr. This is Parr," he whispered hoarsely from the back seat of the moving cab into the comset.

The rhythm of the engine, the gentle sleepy swaying of the car and the monotony of the buildings lulled him. He caught himself, shook his head savagely.

Dimly he could understand the logic advising him to remain in the

city. But it was not an emotional understanding and it lacked the sharpness of reality. For now the two Oholos could follow him easily, determining his distance and direction. If he left Los Angeles, the focus of the invasion, it would be difficult to return after postal delivery. After the invasion it would be nearly impossible. It would give the Oholos added time to run him down. But to remain . . . His body could not stand the physical strain of four more days of continual flight, around, around, up Main—to the suburbs—to the ocean—back to Main again—down the speedway to Pasadena and through Glendale to Main. Change cabs and do it all over again.

"Yes?" the Advanceship said.

"I'm . . . leaving. I've got to leave. I've got to." And suddenly, in addition to the other consideration, he was afraid to be there when the invasion hit. Was it because he was afraid they knew of his treason? Or . . . was it because . . . he liked the buildings? Strangely, he did not want to see the buildings made rubble . . .

The answer: "You have a job to do."

"It's done!" he cried in anguish. "Everything's scheduling. In a few hours now it'll be all over. I can't do anymore here."

A pause.

"You better stay. You'll be safer

there."

"I *can't*!" Parr sobbed. "They'll catch me!"

"Wait."

A honk. The purr of the engine. Clang. Bounce. Red and green lights.

"... If the mailings are secure, you have the Ship's permission. Do whatever you like."

Expendable.

Parr put the comset in his coat pocket and cowered into the seat.

"Turn right!" he said suddenly to the driver. "Now... now... Right again!"

He bounced.

He closed his eyes, resting them. "Out Hill," he said wearily without opening his eyes.

He withstood an irritated mental assault. They were tiring. But not as fast as he was.

THE silent pursuit: three cars out of the multitudes, doggedly twisting and turning through the Los Angeles streets—separated by blocks, even by miles, but bound by an unseen thread that was unbreakable.

"I gotta eat, buddy."

Parr drew himself erect. "A phone! Take me to a phone!"

The taxi ground to a stop in a service station.

Nervously, Parr began to phone airports. Three quarters of his mind was on his pursuers.

On the third try he got promise of an immediate private plane.

"Have it ready!" he ordered. Then, dropping the receiver he ran from the station to the cab.

He jockeyed for nearly thirty minutes for position.

Then he commanded the driver to abandon the intricate inter-weaving and head directly for the airport in Santa Monica.

Shortly, the two other cars swung in line, down Wilshire:

THE job of softening up Earth for the invasion began to pass entirely from the hands of the advancemen. From a ticklish, dangerous proposition at first to a virtual certain mailing day. The world wide mechanism of delivery swung into operation from time zone to time zone, and, in the scheme of conquest the advancemen passed from integral factors to inconsequential objects.

All over America, from East to West, within the space of a single day the post office became aware of the increased, the tremendously increased volume. Previously in certain sections there had been signals in the form of out-bound dribbles. Now there were in-bound floods rising suddenly to the peak intensity of overtime inundations. A million packages, some large, some small, some brown wrapped, white wrapped, light, heavy—no

two alike, no way to tell the new influx from the normal handling.

At the very first each office saw the rush as a unique phenomenon—for there was no reason to report it to a higher echelon which might have instituted an investigation. Merely to take care of the rush, that was all. To process the all-at-once congestion of parcels to be door to door delivered. Later to be marveled at.

Lines formed at parcel windows; trucks spewed out their cargos. Lights burned late; clerks cursed and sweated; parcels mounted higher and higher.

Nor did it break all at once in the press. The afternoon editions carried a couple of fillers about how Christmas seemed to be coming early for the citizens of Saco, Maine, and how a tiny Nevada town whose post office was cobwebby from lack of use suddenly found itself doing a land office business.

Most of the morning editions carried a whimsical AP article that the late radio newscasters picked up and rebroadcast. Then after most West Coast stations were off the air for the night events began to snowball in the East.

The breakfast newscasts carried the first stories. The morning papers began to tie in the various incidents and reach astonishing conclusions . . .

THE propeller was not even turning over. The plane, wheeled out of the hanger, was waiting, cold, and the pilot lounged by the office, smoking a cigarette.

The sky was black, and here and there before the blatant search lights sprouting from dance halls and super markets, clumps of lacy California clouds fluttered like dingy sheepwool in a half-speed Mix-Master.

Parr, tossing a handful of bills at the driver, leaped from the cab and ran frantically toward the office.

The wait was terrible. Should the Oholos arrive, he was boxed in spaci-ously, with no escape. In gnawing at the inner side of his lower lip, he bit through his disguise into real flesh and real blood.

There were forms to sign, responsibility to be waived.

And with every minute, *they* drew nearer.

Finally the airplane motor coughed into reluctant life, and Parr could feel the coldness of artificial leather against his back.

The ship shuddered, moved heavily, shifted toward the wind onto the lighted runway. The motor roared louder and louder and the ship trembled. Slowly it began to pick up speed, the wings fighting for lift.

A searchlight from the pier made a slow ring of light toward the in-

visible stars.

The ground fell away and Parr was on his way to Denver.

Almost immediately, with the pressure still on his mind but fading swiftly, he fell into a fitful sleep and dreamed of treason, while, in the background ominous clouds shifted and gathered to darken the sun of his native planet. Finally, all was a starless black except for half-forgotten faces which paraded before him, telling his treason with hissing tongues in words he could not quite grasp the meaning of.

THE air of Denver was clear and bright—crystal clear, drawing in the mountains, opening up the sky like a bent back box top. The new sun seemed small.

Parr stood on a street corner acutely aware of the thin air and the bright clean sky. An open sky that seemed to be trying to talk to him. He snorted at the absurdity of the thought but he strained half consciously to listen.

He walked on, his feet tapping sharply on the concrete, his mind foggy from the uncomfortable sleep.

A building to the left momentarily reminded him of a slide shown long ago in a classroom on a distant planet, and he wondered if the picture had been taken in this city (knowing, deeply, that it could not have been).

Parr took a newspaper from a

stand. Tucking it under his arm he continued to walk until he found a hotel.

He ate breakfast hurriedly in the annex and then rented a room with a radio. He went to it, lay relaxing on the bed, his mind open and free but uneasy again as he thought of treason.

"Parr," he said into the comset. "I'm in Denver."

"Have you escaped?"

"They will follow me," Parr said wearily. "But for the moment, I'm free."

"We'll send our Denver advance-man to you," the Ship said. "The two of you should be able to handle the Oholos."

Parr's mouth was dry. He named the hotel.

"Wait, then."

He lay back but felt no exultation. He tried to force it, but there was nothing.

And then, staring at the headlines, knowledge of success broke all around him and he was trembling and jubilant. He sprang up, paced the room, moving his hands restlessly.

He rushed to the window, looked out into the street. The people below passed in a thin nervous stream. Unusually few; many more were glued at home, waiting for the mail.

A postal delivery truck turned the corner, rolled down the street before the hotel. All action ceased;

all eyes turned to watch its path.

Parr wanted to hammer the wall and cry, "Stop! Stop! I've got to ask some questions first! Stop! There's something wrong!"

PARR was shaking. He sat on the bed and began to laugh. But his laughter was hollow.

His victory—a Knoug victory. . . He frowned. Why had he automatically made a differentiation where there should be none? He realized that the mailing success had released him from nervous preoccupation in Knoug work; for the first time he was free of responsibility, and he could think . . . clearly . . . about . . . He wanted to hammer the terrifying new *doubts* out of his mind. But they gathered like rain clouds. He went to the mirror and fingered his face. "What's wrong? What's wrong?" Knoug victory had a bitter taste.

He suddenly pictured the civilization around him as a vast web held in tension by a vulnerable thread of co-operation, now slowly disintegrating as the thread crumbled. And he took no joy in the thought.

He began to let images float in his mind. Imagined scenes, taking place beyond the walls.

A man went in to pay off a loan, his pockets stuffed with money.

"I'm not taking it."

"Whatsa matter? It's legal tend-

er. You *gotta* take it."

Bills on the counter.

"You didn't earn that!"

"It don't matter."

"It isn't any good. Everybody's got it."

"That don't *matter*."

"It's worthless!"

"Yeah? Listen: 'For all debts, public and private . . .'"

Parr's mind reached out to grasp the unsettling immensity of it. He flipped on the radio; half heard an excited announcer.

Parr thought: All over the world, each to his own: coins, bills, dollars, rupees, pesos, pounds—how many million parcels were there? Each stuffed with enough to make its owner a man of wealth, as wealth was once measured.

Parr thought it was terrifying, somehow.

And the headline of the paper admitted: "No Test To Reveal Good Money From Bad."

(There was a mob. They were storming a liquor store, while the owner cowered inside. He was waiting for the police. But the police were too busy elsewhere, so finally, to salvage what he could before the mob took his stock for nothing he opened the door, crying, "Form a line! Form a line!")

Parr thought of the confusion that would grow.

Prices spiraling.

(In the United State Senate, a member took the floor to filibuster until California had its mail delivery and its fair share of the free money.)

This was the day work stoppages would begin.

FAMINE PREDICTED . . .
PRESIDENT IN APPEAL TO
. . . GUARD MOBILIZED . . .

Riots. Celebrations. (A church burned the mortgage gratefully.)
Clean shelves. Looming scarcity.

By the time the sun dipped into the Pacific, the whole economic structure of the world would be in shambles.

Governments doubtless would blame each other (half-heartedly), propose new currency, taxes, and the gold standard again.

Industrial gears would come unmeshed as workers took vacations. Electric power, in consequence, would begin to fail.

(Looting already occupied the attention of the better part of the underworld, and not a few respectable citizens decided to get it now and store it for use when it would be unavailable because others had done likewise.)

Stagnation tomorrow. But as yet, the fear and hysteria had not really begun. Parr shuddered, sickened. "What have I *done*?"

It would take months to unuddle the chaos.

Earth was ripe for invasion . . .

PARR aroused from a heavy stupor. The pressure was back. He moaned, and the knock on the door jolted him into startled animal movement.

The knob turned. Parr tensed, although he could tell that the Oholo team was still distant. "Who is it?"

The door opened and a disguised Knoug slipped through. Immediately behind him a simian-like Earthman towered. "Come in," the Knoug said. When they were inside, he shut the door.

"The Ship sent me over," the Knoug said. "You wanted help? My name's Kal. You probably remember me on Ianto?"

Parr swung his legs from the bed and stood up. "You feel the pressure?"

Kal rumbled angrily.

"Two Oholos," Parr said. "I've been dodging them."

"Two, eh? Okay. It's a good thing I brought Bertie along. Two, you say. Well I'll be damned."

Kal turned to the Earthman. "There'll be two, Bertie. So watch yourself. . . ."

Bertie grunted noncommittally.

"Okay. Now like I told you, shoot when I give you the mental signal. You'll see the ones."

"Uh-huh," Bertie said, chewing complacently.

"Go on downstairs then."

Bertie hunkered forward and

leered at Parr. "Sure. Sure."

"Hurry the hell up," Kal said.

Bertie shuffled to the door, opened it, left the room.

Parr swallowed uneasily.

Kal chuckled. "Good one, Bertie. Useful. Damn this pressure. Glad I brought him. They won't be looking for an Earthman, eh? So when they try to come in here after us, he'll drop 'em, eh?"

Parr wet his lips. "They're getting nearer."

"Relax," Kal said. He crossed to the bed and sat down. "The Fleet's out. It just came out. Did you hear?"

PARR felt a shock of surprise.

He imagined the hundred powerful ships of the fleet coming, one by one, from the dead isolation of hyperspace. In his mind's eye he could see the faint glimmer of the static shield—the protective aura—form slowly in real space; he could imagine the ships safe within their electric sheaths which caught the hull-wrenching force of transition and dissipated it from the heavy steel plating. He could imagine one ship—perhaps one—popping out, shieldless, battered by the force vortex, and perhaps leaking air or ruptured entirely because the protective aura had collapsed under pressure. Then he saw the ships neatly pulling into formation, grouping for instructions, waiting

for the attack signal.

"Day after tomorrow they attack," Kal said.

"They're closer," Parr whispered.

Kal concentrated. "Yeah. I feel them. Come to the window." He stood up and crossed the room in quick cat-like strides.

Parr followed him and the two of them stared down. Perspiration stood on Parr's forehead. After a moment they saw Bertie come out from beneath the hotel awning. He seemed small at a distance, and they saw him toss a cigarette butt carelessly to the sidewalk. He moved leisurely away from the entrance and leaned against the side of the hotel, one hand in his overcoat pocket.

Kal sneered, "You think they'll drive right up?"

Parr's face twitched. "I don't know . . . if they know there's two of us . . ." He glanced left along the street. "I guess they will. I guess they'll try to come right in after us."

Kal chuckled. "That's good. That's damned good, eh?"

Parr turned to stare at him. "They're strong."

"They won't be looking for Bertie."

"Listen," Parr whispered hoarsely. "They're stronger than we are."

Kal snarled a curse.

"No," Parr said intently. "They are."

"Shut up!"

"Listen," Parr said. "I know. I've . . ."

Kal turned slowly. "They're not stronger. They *couldn't* be stronger. Even if Bertie misses, we'll get them. If they're so strong, why haven't they already carried the fight to us? If they're so strong, they should be ready to attack us, so why don't they?"

He turned back to the window.

"They're almost here," Parr said.

A cab turned the corner. "Feel them center on us?" Parr said, drawing down his shield as tightly as he could.

Kal, tense-faced, nodded.

Parr stared fascinated as the cab screeched to a halt.

Then Parr felt a wave of sickness and uncertainty; he reached out for Kal's elbow. "Wait!" he cried.

But already, below, Bertie jerked into explosive action.

He shot three times. The male Oholo pitched forward to the gutter.

Bertie's gun exploded once more, but the muzzle was aimed into the air. He crumpled slowly, and the gun clinked to the sidewalk from nerveless fingers.

"He got one," Kal said in satisfaction. "The other one must be quicker 'n hell."

Parr let out a tired sigh.

"That's that," Kal said. ". . . I'll

be damned, a female Oholo! She won't dare to try two of us alone."

Parr's eyes were fixed below. In what seemed a dream, he watched her get out of the cab. She glanced up and down the street. She looked up, quickly, toward their window. And then she darted across the sidewalk toward the hotel entrance.

"I'll be damned!" Kal cried. "She's coming up anyway!" His eyes sparkled gleefully. He searched his lips with his tongue. "Let's both hit her now! She's near enough!"

"No!" Parr cried sharply. "No! Let her get closer . . . Let's . . . let's make sure we get her."

They could feel her nearing them, not quickly, not slowly, but with measured steps.

CHAPTER IX

SHE was just outside the door and Parr felt something like momentary confusion before the hate came. Yet when it did it was tinged and colored as he thought of her walking toward them, alone. He tried to concentrate on her remembered image, tried to call up the previous hate in all its glory. He could not; instead, even the hate he knew drained away. In its place he felt—not fear exactly—not fear for himself but of the inevitability of death. Not his death—hers.

He saw Kal's lips curl, and then he winced. Fingernails dug into his palms.

And the door opened and she stood before them. There was a breathless instant, absolutely still, while time hung fire. Her eyes were aflame. Eyes, he knew, that were capable of softness as well. Eyes steady, intent, unafraid. He was frozen in delicious surprise that tingled his spine, and he felt his scalps crawl. He also felt deep awe at her courage.

She came into the room, closed the door, stood with her back leaning lightly against it. Her eyes blazed into his.

Her red lips moved delicately. "Hello," she said. "I've been looking for you." She had not glanced at Kal.

"Now!" Kal cried wildly.

Parr wanted to scream something meaningless, but before the sound could bubble forth the room seemed to erupt into a colored blaze. She had struck at him with a lethal assault!

He reeled, fighting back for his life, conscious now of Kal fighting at his side.

Her eyes were steady, and her face frowned in concentration. She was icy calm in the struggle and there was cold fury in her whips of thought. But slowly, under their resistance, her eyes began to widen in surprise.

For a breath-held moment, even with the two of them against her, the issue seemed in doubt; Kal half crumpled, stunned by a blast of hot thought that seared away his memory for one instant.

She could not turn fast enough to Parr, nor could she, in feinting his automatic attack, strike again at Kal. Then again, the two of them were together, and slowly, very slowly, they hedged her mind between them and shielded it off.

Kal recovered.

Parr gritted his teeth in a mental agony he could not account for and stripped at her outer shield. Kal came in too and the shield began to break.

The Oholo still stood straight and contemptuous in defeat, her eyes calm and deadly as she still struggled against them.

She struck once more with fading strength and Parr caught the thrust and shunted it away. And then he was in her mind.

HE held a stroke that would burn like a sun's core, and almost hurled it. But there was a great calmness before him and he hesitated a fraction of a second in doubt as he stared deep into her glazing eyes. He felt his heart throb in new pain.

Kal struck over him, and the Oholo went limp, suddenly, and sank unconscious to the floor, a

pathetic rag doll. A tiny wisp of thought struggled out and faded.

Kal cried in triumph and gathered for the final blow.

Great, helpless rage tore at Parr then, and almost before he realized it he sent a powerful blast into Kal's relaxing shield. Kal rocked to his heels, dazed, and his left hand went to his eyes. He whirled, lax mouthed, surprised.

"What . . . ?"

"She's mine!" Parr screamed wildly, "She's mine!"

"The hell—"

In fury Parr slapped the other Knoug a stinging blow across the mouth. "Get out! Get out! Get out or I'll kill you!"

Kal's eyes glazed in surprise.

Parr was panting. "I'll finish her," he gasped. "Now get out!"

Kal's eyes met his for a moment but they could not face the anger in Parr's.

"Get out or I'll kill you!" Parr said levelly, his mind a welter of emotions that he could not sort out and recognize.

Kal rubbed his cheek slowly.

"Okay," he said hoarsely. "Okay."

Parr let breath out through his teeth. "Hurry!"

Kal's lips curled. His shoulders hunched and he seemed about to charge. But Parr relaxed, for he saw fear in the Knoug's eyes. Kal straightened. He shrugged his shoulders indifferently, spat on the

carpet without looking at Parr and stepped over the unconscious Oholo. He jerked the door open and without looking back slammed it behind him.

Parr was trembling and suddenly emotionally exhausted.

PARR'S knees were water. He stared fascinated at the fallen Oholo. He sank to the bed. He let his thoughts touch her unconscious mind as it lay exposed and helpless, and he wondered why he did not strike the death blow. He tried to think of stripping her mind away slowly, layer by layer, until she lay a helpless babbling infant, her body weak and pliant to his revenge. But he thought of her clear eyes and he was sickened and ashamed.

He called up memories of Oholos—the captured few—and now for the first time he knew general respect rather than hate. And thinking of Knougs, he writhed.

Yet he was conditioned to hate and he was conditioned to kill. He must kill, for the conditioning was strong. He tried to fight down the revolt of his thoughts, and, in recognizing the revolt at last, knowledge came. The guilt of treason. Not for any act. His treason was doubt; and doubt was weakness, and weakness was death. He could not be weak for the weak are destroyed. But he seemed, for a heart beat, to see through the fabric of

Empire which was not strength at all. No he thought, I've believed too long. It's in my blood. There's nothing else.

He went to the wash basin and drew a glass of water. He carried it to the Oholo, knelt by her head and bathed her temple with his dampened handkerchief until she moaned and threw an arm weakly over her forehead. Her hand met his, squeezed, relaxed, and was limp again.

He carried her to the bed and sat beside her, staring at her clear face, which was an Earthface. (I've been in this body too long, he thought, I'm beginning to think all wrong.) For the face was not without beauty for him.

He shook his head dazedly, trying to understand himself.

(Here is the enemy, he thought. How do I know? I have been told ever since I can remember. But is it true? Does saying it make it true? But what else can I believe? One must believe something!)

SHE opened her eyes, stared at him uncomprehending. He waited patiently as she gathered her loose thoughts and tied them down. She smiled uncertainly, not yet recognizing him.

Finally he could see understanding in her eyes.

"Your mind is too weak to fight," he said. "If you try to shield I will

kill you."

Her lips curled. "What do you want?"

"Don't try to shield," he warned. He studied her face and his chest was tight. He looked away from her face.

"I've got to ask you some questions," he said. "After that, I'm going to kill you."

There was no fear in Lauri's eyes. "Go ahead," she said calmly. "Kill me."

"I . . . I . . . want to ask you something first," he said. "I've got to ask you some questions."

Her lips glistened and he felt sympathy, that he could not understand. And seeing her frown, he shielded the thoughts from her.

"You're not . . . quite like I thought you were," she said, very calmly.

"I am!" he snarled. "I am what you thought!" He was ashamed of the sympathy he had let her sense, and then he was ashamed of being ashamed, and his mind was confusion.

"Why did you—did you leave this planet as an unprotected flank, like this?" he said. It was a question, he knew, that had to be answered, before . . . before . . . what?

"They weren't ready to join us," she said.

"What do you mean?"

"They were not developed enough to join us," she said.

"Why didn't you conquer them!" he insisted. "You were strong enough. Why didn't you conquer them?"

She said: "We couldn't do that. We don't have the right to do that."

In that instant, it all became clear. Suddenly truth overwhelmed him, wave after wave, like a sickness. "No!" he cried. "No!" He dropped his head into his hands. "Lies, lies, lies!" He saw the wrongness, the terrible wrongness, and he searched desperately over his life for repudiation, an excuse. But he found none.

They had come to him and said; This is the law of life. And they took him and trained him, and showed him nothing else. He had been scarcely a child at the first school of soldiery, and they had fashioned his mind, a pliant mind, and ground doubts out (if there had been any.) They told him that the law was strength, and strength was destiny, and destiny was to rule those below, obey those above, and destroy those who did not agree. There were no friends and enemies—only the rulers and the ruled. And the ruler must expand or die of admitted weakness.

"It's all lies!" he said. He felt the crumbling away of the certainty he had lived by. And before the helpless Oholo he felt weak and defeated and suddenly he realized that his mind shield was down.

She reached out gently to touch him.

Below, a police siren wailed in the streets. A car for corpses.

HE tried to shake the hand away. "They lied," he said. "They lied about everything. They lied that you were ready to conquer us. They told us you were cowardly and would kill us if we did not kill you first, and that we must take . . ."

She said: "It was worse than we thought. We did not think you were strong enough to attack us. Not here. We thought if we let you alone you would collapse of your own weight."

"I never knew," he said. "There wasn't any way to know. You have to do what everyone else does. You get to think they must be right." He made a small sound. "When I first came here—it started to bother me, when I saw the planet was unprotected—when I saw how strong you were . . . But I had so many things to do. I was too busy to think. But I felt something at the very first about your presence here . . ."

She stirred restlessly on the bed. He knew that he was defenseless before her because she had recovered, but she did not strike out. "Trying to help them," she said. "A few of us came to help them. They needed us. We were trying

to prevent a war. And a few more years—if we'd . . . but that's gone now. You'll destroy it all."

He stood from the bed and it creaked.

"We were slowly changing their governments," she said. "We would have succeeded." He felt her mind slowly gather, and there was infinite bitterness, and he tensed. But still she did not strike at him.

"I want you to go," Parr said. "Before the other Knoug comes back. Get out."

Words damned up inside him. He had been trained to hate and trained to kill. The emotions were loose now. There was no outlet for them. He was frustrated and enraged. Hate bubbled about in him, fermenting. He had been trained to hate and to kill. Lauri winced as she felt the turmoil. "Get out!" he screamed.

The door crashed open.

Three figures lunged through.

"Lauri, thank God!" one of them cried. "We thought he'd killed you."

Parr suddenly found his arms held by two Oholos.

"We got here as soon as we could pick up your thoughts."

Lauri said, "Jen is already dead."

One of the Oholos slapped Parr's face savagely. "We'll kill this one for that!" he snarled.

Lauri sprang from the bed and sent the weapon spinning from the hand of the leader of the three Oholos. He gave a startled gasp. The weapon hit the carpet and slammed to rest against the far wall. "Don't!" she cried.

"You're crazy!" the leader snarled. "What's wrong with you?"

"He saved my life," Lauri said, panting.

"He's Knoug," the leader sneered. "You know damned well he was trying to use you for something or other."

Parr stared, fascinated. He was surprised to find that he was not afraid. The shock of capture had not yet passed, and he seemed to be watching a drama from which he was removed.

"No!" Lauri said. "No, he wasn't!"

"How can you say that, Lauri? Look what he's done! Look what he's already done!"

"Unshield, Parr, show them," Lauri commanded.

Parr hesitated, trying to divine the plot and see what was required of him.

"It's a trick," the leader said. "They've got some way to fool us, even with an open mind!"

Lauri's eyes were wide.

The leader jerked his hand. "Kill him," he instructed.

The Oholo on Parr's left released

Parr's arm and reached inside his coat for a weapon.

Lauri darted across the room and pounced on the weapon lying at the base of the wall. She seized it and rolled over. She aimed it steadily at the Oholo on Parr's left. "Don't do that," she said. "Let him go." She got to one knee.

PARR felt the grip ease on his right arm. He stood free. And for the first time—with strange hope—the feeling of unreality vanished.

"You're insane!" the Oholo on Parr's right rasped.

She jerked the muzzle of the weapon. "I told you. He saved my life. He could have killed me. He didn't."

"A trick!"

"Get away from him!"

Reluctantly the two stood back, and the leader shifted uneasily on his feet.

"Don't you try it," Lauri suggested. "For all you know, I might really shoot. You aren't that quick."

Parr let out his breath.

"You!" she snapped at him. "Get to the door!"

Dazed, he obeyed her. He shook his head to clear it. He was afraid they would try to stop him.

"Open it!"

He opened the door and hesitated, looking at her.

"I'm coming," she snapped. Still

covering the three Oholos she got to her feet and began to back toward him. "Don't follow," she warned the three before her.

"You know what this means?" the leader said. "You know what it means to help the enemy?"

"Go on out," she told Parr. "He saved my life," she said doggedly.

He obeyed. She followed him. She fumbled for the door knob, found it. "Run!" she cried. She slammed the door.

They ran desperately for the stairs. Their feet pounded on the soft carpet as they clattered down. She was almost abreast of him.

"Help me!" she cried when they passed the first landing.

And a moment later Parr knew what she meant. They were trying to tear into his mind, and she was holding them off with her own shield. He joined her as well as he could, marveling at the vast strength she had recovered.

"Hurry!" she cried. "I can't hold it much longer." She lurched into him and he put an arm around her waist.

AND then they were through the lobby and into the silent street. No curious spectators were lingering to stare at the drying patch of dirty brown in the gutter beyond the awning.

"This way!" she cried.

As they fled on the pressure

weakened. She was running fleetly at his side now, her brow unfurrowed, and yet he knew that she was still holding the shield under terrific pressure.

"In here," she gasped, suddenly turning into a narrow alleyway. "Stop!" she said. She half dragged him down to the pavement behind a row of packing crates.

"They'll be right after us!" he panted.

"No. Listen. Follow my lead. I think I can blanket us, if you help me."

Parr felt the warmth of her thoughts around him, and then they began to go up beyond his range and he had to strain to stay with them. Underneath her thoughts his mind began to quiet, and, in a moment he felt—isolation.

"Help, here," she said.

He saw the weakness and strengthened it. With her helping, he found the range less high, and he could almost relax under it. And their minds were very close together, and their thoughts were completely alone. "We're safe here," she whispered.

He listened to his own far away breathing, and heard hers, too, softer but labored.

They crouched, waiting, and the street before them was quiet in the sunlight, for the mail trucks were out, and no taxis moved. The city—for the moment—was deathly

still and waiting uneasily. The high air was sharp in his lungs.

"They've missed us," she said at length. "Wait! They're . . . They're after . . . it's another Knoug. They think we've separated, and they think it's you."

"That would be Kal," Parr said. "He must have been waiting nearby." He brought out the comset. "He must have seen us come out together."

He flicked open the comset, heard, ". . . joined with the Oholos. Parr and the other just left the hotel together."

"He's told the Advanceship," Parr said to the girl.

"It doesn't make any difference," Lauri replied wearily.

And Parr breathed a nervous sigh, for the hate had found its channel. The Empire had made him unclean and debased him, and he had to cleanse himself. His vast reserve of hate shrieked out against the Empire; their own weapon turned against them.

"I'd like to get back to the Advanceship," Parr said. "If I could get back, I could smash in their faces!"

"Oh," she said:

THE comset sputtered excitedly. "Three Oholos after me! They're armed! Must be new ones. The other two weren't armed!"

The comset was silent.

"Three?" Parr said. "That's right, there were three. I thought there were just five on the whole planet."

"There's about fifty now. They landed last night. Out in the Arizona desert. They're the only ones who could get here in time."

Parr felt elation. But it passed. "Fifty . . . That's not enough to stop the invasion."

"It's all we could get here," Lauri repeated.

Parr groaned. "The Knougs will shield the planet tomorrow. It will trap those fifty on the surface. And us. They'll shoot us, if we're lucky. But I'd like to kill some first!"

The comset crackled, and the Ship voice said: "How many new ones altogether?"

"I don't know," Kal answered. "I only know of three."

"We'll hurry the attack, then, before they're set. Can you hold out, Kal?"

"I don't know," Kal said.

The attack. The meaning of it suddenly rang in Parr's ears. Until a second ago, he had seen his hate as personal; and, now he realized that the Empire was ready to capture a planet and then to destroy a System. And he saw the vast evil of the Empire hurtling toward Oholo civilization. He gnashed his teeth.

Lauri's hand jerked on Parr's elbow. "The one you call Kal is

dead."

"I'm glad," Parr was grim. He remembered the savage eyes which the Earth disguise could not conceal. "I'm glad."

"Kal, Kal," the Advanceship called into emptiness. "Kal! Come in, advancement Kal!"

Parr flipped off the comset.

She lowered the thought blanket completely. "Relax. Try to relax."

"Why did you do it?" he said.

"Why didn't you let them kill me?"

"I don't know," she said slowly. "You saved my life. I couldn't let them kill you. I saw how you felt, how you suddenly changed. How you'd become a new person all at once. I couldn't pass judgment on you after that. I hated you and then I didn't hate you anymore. It doesn't matter. It's too late to matter. I . . . I . . ."

Her mind was warm against his.

"They're going back to join the others in the desert now," she said. "They're going to get ready to fight the attack."

"Lauri," Parr said. "Lauri, I've got to do something!"

CHAPTER X

(New York had broken windows now, and the streets were glass littered. An occasional white face peered out suspiciously from above a ground floor. But the heart beat of subways was stilled. The cry had

been: "You'll *starve* in the City!" and there had been an hysterical exodus, slow at first and then faster and faster and faster. The moon marched her train of shadows in the cavern streets.)

In Denver, the moon rode the mountains, calm, misted, serene.

"Parr," he spoke into the comset, and he felt Lauri's hand tighten on his elbow.

He glanced nervously at the sky. He was afraid to see the planet shield blossom as it might any minute to signify the attack had begun. But he feared even worse the absence of it.

"Parr?" the Advanceship spat back.

"The Oholos have a defense system around their own planets. *It won't do you any good to capture this one!* You won't be able to get nearer!"

"You are guilty of treason, Parr!"

"You can't get at their inner system! They have a defense ring that can blast your Fleet out of space."

"Lies!"

Parr glanced at Lauri beside him in the darkness. "No!" he said. "They are stronger than you are!"

"They would have attacked us if they were," the Knoug said calmly.

"They don't think like that!"

"A poor bluff, Parr."

"Stop!" Parr said, "Listen . . ."

He looked at Lauri again. "No use. They cut off."

"I didn't think they'd bluff," Lauri said. She looked across the street. The street lights had come on on schedule, but they soon flickered out as the power supply waned. The city was dark.

"Will they scorch the planet?"

PARR glanced once more at the sky. "I think they're holding off trying to gain new information on your Oholos. Or maybe they're having trouble getting ready. We'll know very soon whether they'll scorch it or assault it with an occupation force."

Lauri said, "You tried."

"If we could *convince* them, like I was convinced . . . if we could show them you *were* strong and peaceful . . ."

"But we aren't strong, Parr. They caught us unprepared. If we had a year or two . . ."

"How long would it be before you could get reinforcements here?"

Lauri bit her lower lip. "At least a month. We'd have to organize the units and everything. No sooner."

"Oh."

"What were you thinking?"

"I thought," Parr said. ". . . I thought I might hold the attack off . . . for as much as a couple of hours."

"That wouldn't help."

Parr swallowed and cleared his throat nervously. "I don't know. Maybe it would give the Oholos more time to prepare. It might help a little."

"How?"

"I'm going to try that. I've got to do something, Lauri."

He flipped open the comset and started to speak, but the channel was already busy. It was filled with crackling explosive Knoug language.

Parr began to listen intently.

It was a conversation between the Flagship and one of the other ships of the Fleet. "... Parr's right," the other ship said. "So they're down there. They say they've fought Oholos, and he's probably right..."

"How many are there?" the Flagship demanded.

"Thirteen. All in the engine room."

"Tell them Parr was bluffing," the Flagship ordered.

"I already did."

"Tell them they're guilty of mutiny!"

"I did, and they still won't come out. They're the bunch that were in the assault at Coly. They've been hard to handle ever since."

"All right. Go after them with guns..."

"What is it?" Lauri asked.

"Shhh!" Parr cautioned.

A third circuit opened. "No other

ship reports trouble. It's just this one bunch."

THERE was a harsh curse, guttural and nasty. "These channels are open! The whole Fleet knows about the Coly bunch now!"

"What in hell! *God damn it, get them off!* We've got to isolate..." Click.

Parr stared at the comset in his hand.

Parr smiled thinly. "I did a little good, at least. A bunch of veterans must have been listening in on me... One of the Fleet ships has a little trouble."

"Maybe..." she began excitedly.

"No," Parr said. "It was only thirteen Knougs. It's scarcely a ripple. It might make the rest of the Fleet a little uneasy—but they'll still take orders. I'm sorry Lauri, but it's not going to help much."

"How do you know it won't?" she insisted.

The bitter smile was still there. "I've seen something like it before. In five minutes it will all be over."

"Oh."

"Well," he said after a moment, "I better try to get the Ship. I'm going to hold them off as long as I can."

He clicked open the comset again. "Kal," he lied icily. "Advanceman Kal." For the first time he was glad

of the tinny, voice disguising diaphragm.

"Get off!" the Advanceship ordered. "This is the Commander. We're under communication security, damn it!"

PARR nodded to himself in recognition of what had happened. Commanders were now on the whole communications network. It would prevent ordinary operators from spreading more news of mutiny through the Fleet; it would blanket the manufacturing of rumors. And, if things were running true to course the Flagship was monitoring all channels just in case.

"I've found out the Oholo's disposition," Parr hissed into the tiny comset. "Can you pick me up?"

There was a momentary pause.

"... We thought you were dead, Kal. Why didn't you answer our calls?"

"... Broke my comset," Parr lied quickly. "I've just killed the traitor, Parr, and I'm using his."

There seemed to be suspended judgment in the Ship.

"If you pick me up, I can give you details. But you'll have to hurry! Two Oholos are closing in right now!"

"How many are there altogether?"

Parr hesitated. "Only twenty," Parr said. "I think less than that. It

won't be necessary to scorch the planet."

Again silence. Then the Flagship itself cut in, "All right. We'll pick you up. Where are you?"

"Denver." He made out the street signs in the darkness. "I'm here at a street corner. Eighteenth and Larimer."

"Someone who knows the territory from the Advanceship can pick you up. Ten minutes. Hold on."

"Hurry!" Parr pleaded.

He cut off the comset. He realized he was frightened. The night was growing cold and he took two deep breaths. He let the comset slip from his fingers and shatter on the pavement. He kicked it away in savage annoyance, and snarled a curse.

Lauri shuddered inwardly at his violence, but he did not notice. And she forced a smile and touched him with a warm thought.

"I told them I was Kal," he said.

"I... asked them to pick me up."

Lauri half gasped in surprise.

"They'll hold off the attack until they hear from me again. I'll try to keep them guessing as long as I can."

He was tired. He and Lauri had been walking the streets aimlessly for hours. At first there had been mobs after the mail delivery. Then the governor, conscious of what had

happened in some Eastern cities, had declared martial law and only soldiers were supposed to be on the streets after sundown curfew. Already many people had fled the city in terror.

AS he and Laūri walked side by side, Parr felt he had come to know her better than he had ever known anyone. He realized how strong his mind had grown under its month long test, and he knew that she had come to respect his strength, she who was so strong herself. But it was not her strength he respected. Strangely, it was her weakness—her compassion and her ability to forgive. An unknown thing, forgiveness, a beautiful thing.

She stood silently beside him. Then she said, "What time you gain won't matter."

"Maybe it will!" he said harshly, hating the Empire.

She stared into his face. She shook her head. "No," she said. She touched his cheek. "I ought to say something."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know. That it's a brave thing you want to do . . ."

"After what I've done, I've got to do something to make up for my life."

"What you did doesn't matter anymore."

"Listen," he said. "Listen, Lauri. You better leave. Don't stand here

any longer."

She did not move.

He gritted his teeth. "Hurry up!"

Her mind touched his gently, cloudlike, and drew away. "Let me go with you."

"You know that wouldn't work."

After a minute she turned reluctantly.

"Wait!" he cried after she had gone only a few steps.

Eagerly she turned.

"Listen!" He glanced at his watch. "Listen. The Fleet is nervous. The Knougs are nervous. It might not take much after that Coly bunch revolted . . . They're yellow inside, and the seeds of doubt are there. If we could just make them believe you really had a weapon. An hour from now—give me *one hour*—you're to contact the Fleet on my comset and tell them the Oholos are going to destroy their Advanceship right before their eyes. Then tell them to get out, the whole Fleet, or you'll destroy every ship. That may make them think! That may make them believe!"

"But unless the Ship really is destroyed before their eyes . . ."

"I'll take it into hyperspace without a shield. One minute it will be there, the next minute it won't. Maybe they won't stop to figure it out."

"But you'll be killed!"

"GIVE me just one hour. Go on, damn it. Don't argue!" She seemed ready to cry. Then she bit her lip.

"But—Parr! Parr! I *can't!* How can I? *You broke the comset!*"

Parr's mind was dazed. He tried to think. "... Listen. Find the one Kal had! See if you can find that! You've *got to*, Lauri. It all depends on that. You've just got to find it!"

She hesitated.

"Don't argue," he insisted. "Hurry! They'll be after me any minute."

She seemed to want to say something.

"Run!" he cried. And then she was hurrying away and her mind left him entirely, so there would be no danger of detection when the scout ship came for him. And then she turned a corner, and was gone . . .

THE silver saucer shaped scout ship zipped down the street, banked sharply and vanished, recording (Parr knew) electronic details for its mothership, the pick-up craft.

Parr waited, his mouth dry.

Finally—after what seemed a long time—he saw the dark, moving patch return. It lowered, and Parr could make out the details of the unlighted surface. He sighed with relief. Fortunately it was the small three passenger craft.

It hovered, closed on the intersection and settled. Hoping that neither of its crew knew him by sight, Parr sprinted from the shadows of the building to the opening door.

The distance seemed to unravel before his feet, lengthening like a magic carpet.

His feet hit the edge of the door almost together and grasping the sides he pulled himself in, falling forward and gasping for the crew's benefit, "Oholos!"

The inside of the craft, operating under low flying procedure, was darkened except for the dull orange of the instruments.

"Up!" Parr cried in Knoug, and the craft shot away pressing him to the floor even though the acceleration compensator was whirring in his ears.

He groaned and stiffened, anticipating the light when they were in second procedure level.

He heard one of the crew say: "Pick-up successful."

"Can you berth your craft on the Flagship?"

PARR felt a dread for he had thought to go to the Advance-ship, and that was the one Lauri would name for destruction!

Relief came when the crewman said. "Wrong hanger sort. This isn't combat equipment, sorry."

"All right."

Parr breathed an easier sigh, and the communications set went off.

The lights came on.

Instinctively Parr lowered his head into his arms. He groaned again. "My leg," he mumbled.

"Hurt my leg," he lied.

A crewman knelt beside him. Parr realized then that they were carrying an extra crewman.

The Knoug rolled him over.

There was a startled gasp of recognition and Parr hit him in the neck. He slumped down and Parr had to squirm from under his limp body.

"What the—!"

Parr was on his feet.

"That's not Kal!" one of the others said.

The pilot swiveled around.

Parr dove, realizing, even as he was in the air, that each Knoug was reaching for his focus gun.

He hit the standing Knoug. The Knoug tettered. Parr hit him again.

The pilot had his gun out.

Parr slammed a mental bolt at the pilot and he was surprised to see that the shield folded like hot butter. Even had he wished to he could not have stopped his assault from crisping the other's thoughts to oblivion. He was almost annoyed at the weakness.

He tried a mental assault at the other sagging crewman with equal results.

The craft started to spin out of control.

Parr struggled forward, was slammed sideways, and far below he could see moonlight flash on water.

He was thrown into the controls on the second spin, and he pulled back the emergency equalizer in desperation. The craft skittered.

And then he was in control.

He found the beam on the dial. He was to the left. He centered on it and followed it in.

He jockeyed below the gaping hatch of the Advanceship and came up slowly. The controls were stiff. It was a ticklish job.

Then he was inside. He shied left to set the craft down.

It bounced and half rolled on the deck. Then he struggled to the door.

When he opened it there was an orderly waiting. "That was a hell of a landing," he said. "For—hey!"

He went down easily under the assault. Parr realized his mind had grown even stronger than he had supposed. For the first time he began to hope that he really stood a chance of making it.

He glanced at his watch.

Almost forty-five minutes! It had seemed only five . . .

LAURI ran toward the second building. Her mind usually smooth and calm, was now a welter of conflicting thought. She had tried to reach the other Oholos.

But they shut themselves off. No help from them.

There were no cabs out. And the telephones were dead. She was desperately afraid Kal was in the morgue but she could not risk the time to be sure. Vaguely she remembered the siren that had squalled when the police came for the body of the Oholo and his Earth assailant who had been killed outside the hotel. But she could not remember another siren near the time Kal had been killed. She was forced to assume the police had not come for him.

But she could not be sure.

If the police had not come, she reasoned, then he had not been killed before witnesses. Therefore he had not been killed in the streets.

She knew that he had seen them leave the hotel. That narrowed the range. That he had been killed shortly afterward by the Oholos narrowed the range even more.

He had not been moving when he was killed, and he had just finished reporting Parr's and her flight, meaning that he had been stationary since his observation. And there would be no reason for the Oholos to move or to hide the body.

Therefore his body should be where it had fallen.

There had been four business buildings in the vicinity where a man could have been killed unseen.

She pushed open the doors to the second. The ground floor, within observation range, was easily checked. So was the second. Third. Fourth. Fifth.

She was back in the street. Two more buildings. Half her time gone. She glanced at her watch for verification. Each of the two remaining buildings had four floors.

The nearest one was locked. But there was a light inside. She was puzzled. Then she saw the cleaning maid come down the front stairs, carrying a brace of candles in one hand and a mop and bucket in the other. The old woman moved slowly, unconcerned, oblivious of the outside world, intent only on her job. Lauri shuddered, but she knew that the face would not be calm if she had seen a corpse in her duties. Therefore, there was no corpse inside.

One building left!

But a few minutes later she was back in the streets. There had been nothing on the lower floor, the second floor, and the two top floors needed only a glance.

She sobbed desperately.

Something had been wrong with her reasoning, and she had only twenty minutes left to start from the beginning and find the Knoug's body.

PARR ran quickly along the corridor. He passed two incuri-

ous Knougs. He continued on, winding upward toward the control room which he had to capture. There would be a delicate balance of timing and luck between success and failure.

He was not frightened now; even though he knew he could not personally win the fight in capture or success. His mind was calm. Strangely, too, it was at peace.

He clambered up the final ladder, his hands unsteady on the rungs. The control room door was closed. He tensed, listening, wondering how many of the enemy were inside.

He knocked, his knuckles brittle on steel. He thought, in that fleet second, of Lauri. He wondered dimly if she had found the comset.

"Yeah?"

"I've got Kal out here, sir!" Parr said briskly, hoping to imitate the orderly's voice.

"What the hell!" a voice from inside roared, "I thought we told you to take him down to the Commander's office."

Parr held his breath.

He heard an indistinct mutter of voices inside and he knew that one of them must be on the inter-phone to the Commander.

"Something screwy here!" the voice roared indignantly.

Parr hit the door and it crashed inward with an echoing clang.

He catapulted into the congested control room. In a glance he saw there were only two Knougs. One was at the control banks, half turned in surprise. The other held the phone limply in his left hand, his eyes staring.

Parr kicked the door shut viciously and the sound rang in his ears. He launched himself at the Knoug with the phone. He felt his head meet a soft stomach and he heard explosive air pop from the man's lungs. The Knoug went over backwards, down hard.

The other one roared an oath.

PARR walked on the fallen one's face. He stomped the face and it gurgled. He stomped again in fury as all his frustration and new bitterness found an outlet. He locked the other Knoug in mental battle, but the mind he met was strong, catching him off guard.

The Knoug dove for the huge comset to warn the Fleet.

Parr could hear, from the receiver of the dangling phone, the Commander saying over and over again, "What the hell's going on? What the hell's going on?"

Parr brought the remaining Knoug to his knees with a mental assault.

Parr backed toward the door. As he fought mentally, he managed to slide the force bar across it. They'd

play hell getting him out, at least.

His enemy was down, quivering. Parr panted desperately, and then from beyond the door, he felt the growth of mental assault force. Three minds hurrying toward him! Two more minds came in and he staggered and almost fell.

Then he was down, as if from a hammer blow to the chin. He fought, sickened. He began to crawl toward the control board. And fighting, he struggled up, as if under a great weight. New minds came in. And still he could fight. But he was almost down again.

(Five minutes, he thought.)

He found the right lever, pulled.

There was the crackle of the heterodyne mind shield. And the control room was isolated by a high, shrill whine. He winced, recovering, and smiled inwardly at the careful devices Knoug officers had to protect themselves against a mutinous crew.

He dampened all the thrust engines with three hacking strokes at knife switches, being careful to get the right ones. He ripped out the engine room control. The Advancement ship was dead in space for at least an hour.

HE staggered to the comset. He stumbled over the dead Knoug and kicked the body. He shattered the transmitter with a furious blow.

With fumbling fingers he ripped away the seal the Commander had placed on the receiver. He snapped the volume control to the right. The radio whined.

Someone was trying to call the Advancement, and Parr smiled grimly.

Another circuit broke in on the call. "Their commander is questioning the advancement they brought up, I imagine. Let him go. The information we got from the Texas advancementman supercedes it anyway."

Parr cursed monotonously.

"Forward bank in!" another circuit reported.

"Nine stations on planet shield. Ready?"

There was a crackling of readiness.

"We'll hit before it. Try to get it set in fifteen minutes."

"In position, there. Eight, back a little."

"Clear hulls. Unscreen."

"Check . . . Check . . ."

Parr glanced at his watch. The hour had only minutes of life. What was wrong with Lauri?

"Ready around?"

The Fleet was getting ready to move. Parr screamed in wild frustration.

At the door, the force field was beginning to show strain. Outside they had a huge force director foc-

used on it. Parr speculated idly how they had managed to get it up from the engine room so quickly. The force field at the door began to peel. In a few minutes it would shatter and the control room would be an inferno with every switch and bit of metal melted into smoking blobs.

SHE was searching the shops, kicking in glass, when necessary to gain entrance. She was listening, now, and time dribbled away. Standing amid broken glass, she cocked her head hoping to hear the whisper of the still active comet.

Ten minutes.

What had been wrong with her logic? Why hadn't Kal's body been in one of the four buildings? Even as she searched on she reviewed it in her mind, until suddenly, with an abrupt snap she knew that she had overlooked one. There were not four possible buildings but five.

Kal might have been hiding in the hotel itself!

Nine minutes.

And how many front rooms were in the hotel? A twelve storied welter of windows, and he might be behind any one.

Nine minutes.

Automatically she was running for the hotel.

(Not the lower floors, she thought, or the Oholos would have

had him sooner. They must have come down and then gone back up or else the whole time element was wrong.)

One of the upper floors then?

She would have to chance that.

She was in the deserted lobby. As she ran across it she marveled at the panic of a few hours ago. She saw a busy looter in the shadows, and there were not, certainly enough soldiers to be everywhere.

In her headlong rush she did not see the human form on the second landing before she crashed into him. She gasped as the breath went out of her lungs.

The man reached out for her. "What happened?" His voice was desperate. "I've been asleep, and all of a sudden, when I wake up—"

"Let me go!"

"What happened?" he said pathetically. "The city's so *still*."

She pushed him back and continued up the stairs.

He ran after her. "Wait!"

At the top floor she saw no exit to the roof.

The corridor was "U" shaped, the bottom of the "U" facing onto the street. Six rooms on it.

"Young lady!" the man cried, rounding the corner of the stairs below her. She dropped her mental range into a low register and struck toward him. But she could not quite find his range and he shook

his head and continued up the stairs. She waited, and when he arrived, she said, "Sorry," and hit him on the chin. He rolled halfway down the short flight of stairs.

She searched the six rooms. All were unlocked and empty, and the doors slammed in her wake.

Nothing.

She gritted her teeth and headed for the stairs and the next floor below.

PARR shattered the glass from the emergency deep space suit. He ripped the suit from the hangar and struggled into it with anxious fingers.

It was a minute after the hour.

He hesitated, holding the helmet in his hands.

The force field at the door was nearly gone. The radio crackled with Knoug attack orders.

And then—with infinite relief—he heard her voice, crackling over the other voices. She sounded short of breath and excited.

"What's that?" someone roared in Knoug, and Parr realized they did not understand English, the common language they had used on the planet.

"Idiots!" Parr shrieked. "Fools! Can't any of you understand!"

"I'm going to destroy your Advanceship," Lauri said breathlessly. "I am an Oholo. I'm . . ."

Suddenly a Knoug was translating her message.

Last minute instructions to the Fleet ceased.

"I'm going to destroy your Advanceship," she said again. And then, after a breath, she said, "Be careful! Be careful!" And he knew that the last was not to them but to him.

He could wait no longer. The force field was seconds thin. His mind cried desperately, "Hurry!" He clamped down the helmet and all sound vanished.

But her words rang in his mind, "Be careful!" and he was grateful for them. They choked in his throat.

Then he threw the Advanceship into hyperspace.

THERE was a pinwheel of motion that slammed him into the control panel. He could not hear, but everywhere around him, metal screamed and wrenched and tore.

The force director beyond the door spun loose and sprayed the Knougs around it, and they vanished. It jerked its current cable and was still. A vast rent in the hull let the air whoosh out into hyperspace, and the Knougs all over the Ship puffed and exploded.

Parr came slowly to his senses. He staggered directionless around the control room. Everything was a

shambles.

After a while—nearly an hour had elapsed—he was wandering through silent corridors. It was hot inside his suit.

He found the pick-up ships eventually, but they were ripped from their moorings. One seemed upright and serviceable. He tested the motor. The motor worked. He got out and struggled with the escape hatch. Finally it came loose.

He taxied the pick-up ship out of the mother ship.

Hyperspace was grey and hideous. Here and there lights flashed. The vast, battered derelict of the Advanceship lay below him. Hyperspace sped away. He blasted further from the gutted hull and brought up the space shield of his craft. It wavered around him. Behind him the tortured Advanceship exploded.

He hit back toward real space. The craft skittered under his hands as he wrenched at the controls. The motor was strong, but its delicate shielding apparatus had been damaged and there was a sickening jolt. The shield was off and Parr was falling, down, down, down, and lights in his head exploded.

And he thought it was infinitely sad that he had done something decent for the first time and now he was to be punished for all the rest. Then he knew no more . . .

THE comset had erupted into a babble of incredible confusion after her message. She waited leadenly. She warned the Fleet once more. "If you do not leave at once, we Oholos will destroy your whole Fleet." She had no way of knowing what was happening.

The Knoug commanders, unnerved, cried among themselves:

"No weapon I ever heard of could do *that*!"

"The advanceman was right! They can destroy us!"

"I say we don't stand a chance!"

"Did you hear? It just *vanished*."

"I'm going to order my ship back."

"I've already shielded for hyperspace."

"What's the Flagship say?"

"What's the Flagship *say*?"

"Commander Cei just pulled out. That makes five."

"As for me, I say, Let's go!"

"*The Flagship has already got its hyperspace shield turned on!*"

Slowly the voices died away. The comset was silent in Lauri's hand, and she knew that the Fleet had gone. The Advanceship was destroyed.

Remembering Parr, she bowed her head. She saw the body of Kal lying at her feet, where she had found it in the second room on the tenth floor. And she was crying without sound.

CHAPTER XI

SHE finally got through to the other Oholos. They listened, because the expected attack had not come.

They came for her and she met their airship in the street. They soared above the silent city of Denver.

"A *Knoug*!" one said. "Who ever would have thought a *Knoug* would do that!"

She tried to explain but they did not listen for they were busy with other thoughts. She was still crying, but inwardly now. She said, "Don't you see what he might have become within a few years?"

"Imagine hitting hyperspace without a shield," one Oholo said.

"It must have turned the ship inside out!"

"So the *Knougs* actually believed it was a weapon that did it!" another said, pleased.

Lauri said, woodenly, "He was very strong. He was almost as strong as I am. He would have become even stronger."

"There's no *Knoug* as strong as one of our best workers, Lauri."

"He was more than a *Knoug*," she insisted gently. "A *Knoug* would have just—just gone on being what he was."

She fell silent, remembering.

"It played hell with this planet,"

an Oholo said. "It'll take years to straighten it out."

"Not years," another said, looking down at the night: "No. I think not years. One of the governments we were primarily concerned with has been changed. The people finally got the chance to overthrow it, and they did. That's a good sign. I think our work will be easier now. It's always easier to rebuild than to change."

Lauri!

She froze. "Listen!"

And they listened, high up.

Lauri!

"Yes!" she cried.

Come to me!

She rushed to the pilot room. She took the controls and spun the ship.

"Did you hear that?" an Oholo said, awed.

"Yes," said another. "... He not only went in unshielded, but he managed to get back!"

They shook their heads.

And within fifteen minutes she had found his ship, lying below in dying moonlight.

SHE brought the aircraft down and within seconds she was running to the wreckage and pulling his limp body from it.

When the space helmet was off his head, he gasped, "Tore hell out of my big ship. And . . . then I

even . . . up and . . . wrecked this one, landing . . . I'm just . . . damned clumsy."

"Get the surgeon!" Lauri cried.

She held his head in her arms while her lips moved soundlessly. Then she bent to kiss him on the mouth after the Earth fashion, and Parr had never experienced such a sensation of trust and surrender and promise. He let his hand move gently down her arm.

"We'll stay here," she whispered.

"We'll stay here and help these Earth people, you and I. You'd like that? To help them?"

"Yes," he said. "It would be nice to . . . build instead of destroy. It

would be nice, I think. You and I could help them. I'd like that."

The surgeon came, and they took Parr out of the suit and after a while the surgeon said, "I don't know much about Knougs. But I'm glad this one is going to be all right."

Lauri laughed hysterically. The tears were open again. "I couldn't kill him," she sobbed.

The other Oholos looked puzzled and polite.

"It's a joke!" she said, dizzy with relief. "Of course he'll live, because even I couldn't kill him!"

Parr smiled up at her.

THE END



Velikowsky's Fantasies



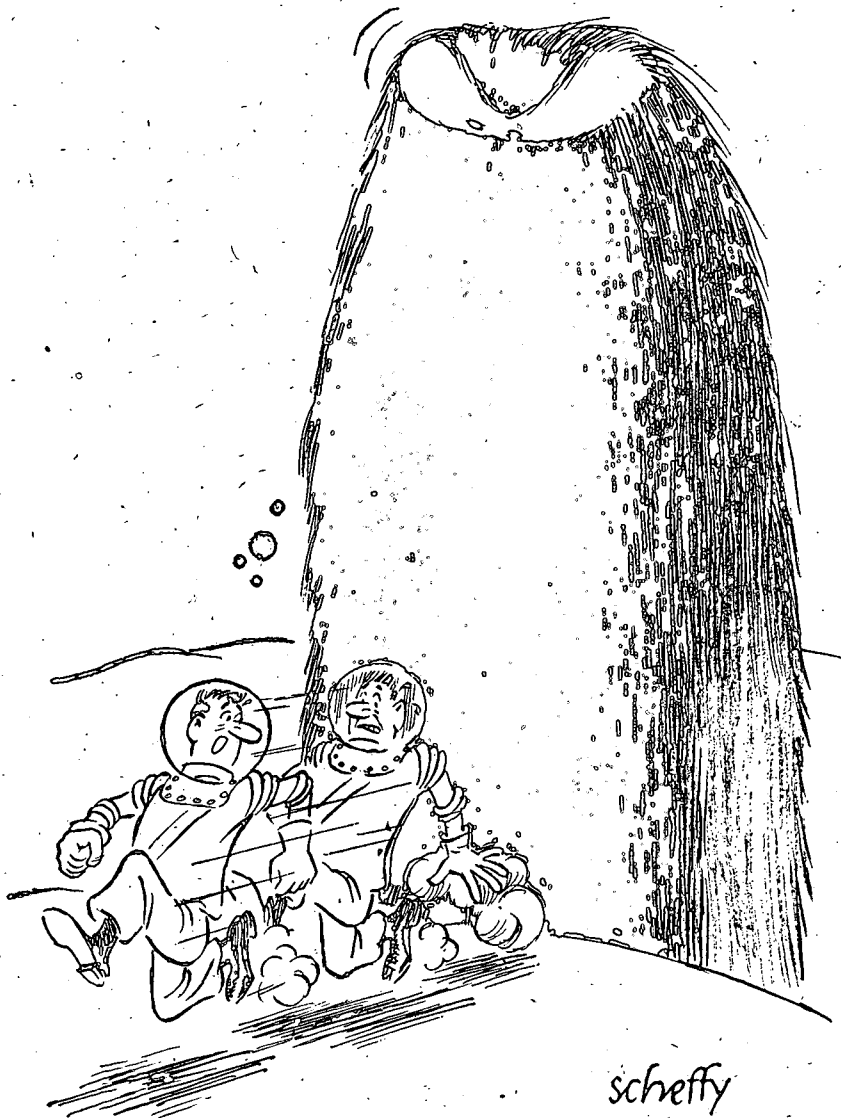
THE astonishingly versatile, talented and well-read "scientist" Velikowsky, re-created another stir in the scientific world with his most recent book, a re-phrasing of his earlier "Worlds in Collision." Velikowsky claims the Earth was created by the passage of a comet near Venus and he marshalls a mountain of documentary evidence to support this thesis. He stoutly maintains that science refuses to recognize him and that essentially he, like Galileo, is a martyr.

Ordinarily Velikowsky's works would receive no scientific attention whatsoever, since they are not scientific treatises, but simply well-written mountains of nonsense, the product of decades of library re-

searching. Unfortunately, prominent laymen have chosen to chastise science for this failure to recognize a "genius" and in sympathy with charlatanry and the art of the mountebank they have given him the printing press.

No one begrudges Velikowsky the latter. But no reputable scientist (the adjective is unnecessary) finds anything but nonsense in the tirades. Yet for some uncanny reason, people with no scientific training persist in defending Velikowsky's "science." A number of scientists were thus forced to examine the Velikowsky work in great detail and then to refute it point by point.

Shades of Bridie Murphy!



"Someday we'll look back on all this and laugh."

GLUG

by

Harlan Ellison

The alien creature was a lovable cuss, and Hobie knew he could get a fortune for it back on Earth. But — there was the problem of feeding it!

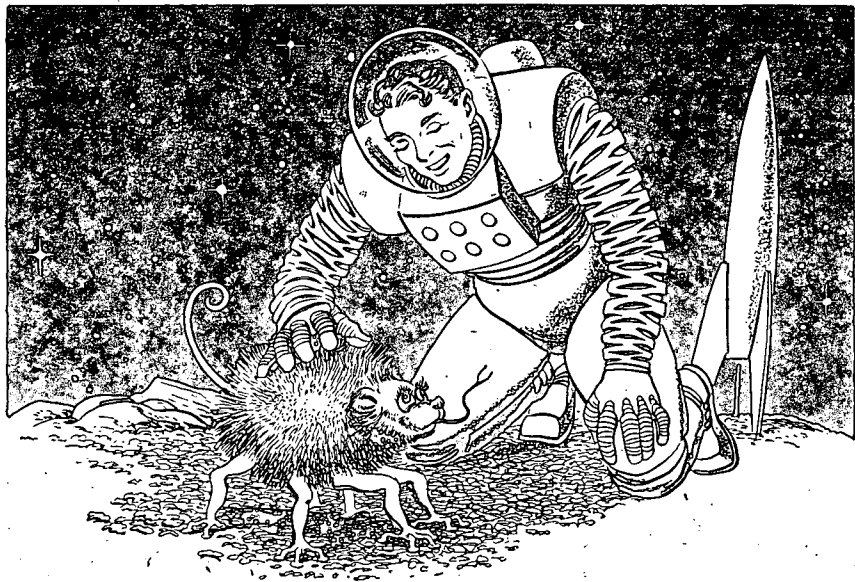
WHEN HOBIE EASTWELL, intreprenuer, came back from small Planet BBB-110 in Messier V, he did not come back alone. He went out in the *Iris Malachee* alone, but he had company when he returned. He had Glug.

Hobie Eastwell was an incredibly lean, incendiary thinker with a deep perception of the value of wealth and the various means—legal and otherwise—to attain it. He had a great respect for money, and the things it would bring; principally women. Women were an integral part of Hobie's life, and though he could easily have been referred to as a cad in his relations with women, still, they were the second most important thing in his life: Money was number one.

In pursuit of number one, and thus number two, Hobie Eastwell had sunk all his gains from the

stock fraud on Venus' Plaid Desert into an inverspace ship—and blasted off for the Perimeter. In search of nothing specific, but certain that time and effort and the natural cunning that lay waiting close to the surface of his mind would bring him a money-making scheme. Anything could be turned to advantage. It was time for a big score; he had been bumming far too long; he wanted to stop running and settle down in wealthy languour.

He had covered over two hundred worlds in the five months he had been aspace. Inhabited worlds, cannibal worlds, settlers worlds and jungle worlds. Worlds of primitive culture and worlds of strange Ter-ran-offshoot. He had landed and assayed them, and taken off again, pressing outward constantly, in search of that one indefinable gold mine idea that would set him up



for the rest of his life.

With number one and two.

But he had encountered nothing worthwhile. The natives had sharpened up from their first encounters with the expanding wave of Terran immigrants, and were no longer willing to trade a holdload of pitchblende for three credits and fifty plasts worth of stylex beads and a kazoo.

The offshoot worlds were unfriendly, most of their populations having been forced to flee Terra for religious or factional reasons, and now that they had settled, they wanted no interlopers to tell them how strange and ungodly were their

vegetarian cultures, or their segregationist cultures, or any one of hundreds of other cultures that had sprung into being.

There were plenty of primitive worlds, of course; and rocks unfit for humans; like Fenerabola with its fire and flame and death, or Titi TV that was a ball of water and clouds and dark, toothed shapes that swam in the endless seas. There was Wallus with a chiefly neon atmosphere, and Quixote that had winds of five hundred miles per hour, and Kirkis I with hordes of ant-like creatures that feasted on flesh. There were lots of worlds, but no gold mines in the

sky—as Hobie often thought of them.

Until he found the galaxy, tagged in the plot-tank as Messier V. Even then, he might have found nothing, had he not stuck-in on Small Planet BBB-110.

And to compound the coincidence, even a landing on that idyllic countryside of a world might have brought no reward—for Hobie was not seeking peace and rest, but wealth and ease—had he not landed near a community of Glugs.

It had happened this way:

The landing was uneventful, and a cursory triple-circum-astrogation of the tiny world showed no intelligent life-forms. At least none that had constructed waterways, highways, buildings or villages.

Hobie set the *Iris Malachee* down on a plain composed of a strange yellow-gold moss. The aft burners shriveled the moss for half a mile behind the ship, and as the tubes crackled and popped with their cooling, Hobie slid into his light pressure suit, and prepared to disembark.

HHE STRAPPED ON the chest console with its gauging devices, intending to take fast readings of the planet for worthwhile minerals, and get off again as fast as he could.

Hobie disliked settling for too

long. Trouble had a way of catching you if you sat still too long.

The ramp slid down from the ship, and Hobie disembarked without event. The moss was golden and rich as far as he could see, and through the filtration-valve on his suit he detected a pungent, sweet odor to it.

At the far edge of his vision, something was moving.

Allowing the gauges and counters on the console to do their work untended, Hobie strode out across the plain of moss to see what it was that moved.

The-thing was not as far away as he had supposed. The planet itself was so small, the horizon was much nearer, and the thing was not large as he had imagined, but really, quite small. It was an animal.

That was the first time man met Glug.

The creature was round as a butterball with six tiny pad-like legs protruding from its underside, keeping it a few inches from the ground. Its head was a small protuberance on the leading side of the egg-shape that was the body. The creature was completely covered with glistening blue fur.

From its fur-surrounded mouth, a tiny forked tongue of lavender flicked in even, methodical stabs. It was eating the golden moss. As Hobie strode up to it, it seemed

to take no notice.

An involuntary, "Owwahhh" came from Hobie. It was that sort of animal. It was cuddlesome; it made you want to gather it up and just hug it till it purred . . . or barked . . . or lowed . . . or whatever it did. It was the perfect pet, for it was small, and cute, and affection-provoking. So, the "Ahhh," of affection from the stolid Mr. Eastwell. He stood and loved it for a full three seconds before the creature turned from its meal, and looked up with big, blue eyes, very human eyes.

"Glug!"

It neither barked nor meowed nor mooed nor anything else a Terran animal would do; it glugged. A warm, bubbly, thoroughly likeable sound, it glugged at Hobie, and its little forked tongue made a clever circular movement about its mouth.

Hobie was enchanted.

Hobie was overcome.

Hobie was thinking.

A natural! A downright, unbelievable natural. He clicked off the chest console. Radioactives were a waste of time. He had found his gold mine.

The creature—the Glug—did not even flinch as Hobie stooped and gathered it into his arms. A bit of golden moss clung to the whisker-fur of the creature.

ONE WAS ENOUGH, for a start. In fact, one was all that was needed. The harder to come by he made the glug, the better were his chances of making a killing. Hobie had it figured down to the decimal point.

Terra was an old world; sated with its own accomplishments. It was looking for new thrills, new emotions, new pleasures. And the glug would be a natural. On a world where everything was old, here was something new. He would get publicity for the glug. He would build it into a sensation. He would make it desirable and inaccessible—and expensive. The wealthiest people on Terra would bid for the pet. For it was the only one of its kind. A fortune lay sleeping in Hobie's lap as he tooled the *Iris Malachée* through inerspace on a rigamarole course for Terra.

The involved, backtracking, misleading course would throw off anyone who might tamper with the plot-tank later, in hopes of discovering where Hobie had found Glug. He had touched down on many worlds, and the chance of anyone finding Small Planet BBB-110 was negligible. His investment was safe.

In the hold of the ship was a good supply of the golden moss, which, it had turned out, the glug ate to the exclusion of all other

food. That had provided yet another means of attaining the wealth he desired. The glug would cost a small fortune for anyone, but the real money was going to come from the moss. If the purchaser wanted to protect his investment, keep his pet alive, he would have to buy the moss—from Hobie.

There was a million, no—a helluva lot of millions, in this promotion. All he had to do was sell the glug, and he was set up for life. No more bumming the star routes, no more conniving and shadey deals, no more running from the cops, he was set for the duration.

He ran his hand absently through the thick, sweet-smelling fur of the glug, thinking what a wonderful beast it was.

The glug lay sleeping contentedly in his lap.

While the inverspace light-years peeled away.

EDDIE KLUGMAN was a newspaperman, and neither proud nor unhappy with his lot. His was a job, and it brought him more than enough to get sauced with each weekend, so he did his job as best he could—and with talent, his best was quite good enough—and paid no attention to the world about him. In a bar fight he had once killed a man. Hobie

had covered for him.

Eddie Klugman was blackmailed in a mild way by Hobie Eastwell, when the *Iris Malachée* was still outside the atmosphere of Terra.

"Eddie baby!" Hobie enthused, over a closed circuit vid hookup, "Ya look great, Eddie boy!"

Klugman was half in his cups. His lean, angular face was a spotted and wrinkled satire of Lincoln's face. His red-rimmed eyes opened slightly. He was lying on his bed in his hotel, a three-quarters empty bottle in his fist, clutched to his chest, and the picture the vid presented was one of dissipation and despair.

"What the hell do *you* want? I thought you were aspace."

Hobie scratched the back of Glug's small, cute head and stared into the vid: "Eddie baby, I need a favor."

"No!"

"Listen, Klugman," Hobie's tone had shifted from syrupy brotherhood to obvious malice in an instant, "don't switch off, or the cops will find out about a guy named Dester in a joint called Thé Shag-Dag Roost. You remember him, Klugman?"

A look of miserable resignation settled across Klugman's battered features.

"I'm quiet, Eastwell. I mind my biz and I just want to keep living

till I go under quiet. Leave me alone, for God's sake. What do you want from me, you vulture?"

Hobie knew he had the other man under his thumb. "I want a little publicity, Eddie pal. I want a little flack in behalf of my recent space jaunt."

Klugman swirled the Scotch in the bottle and tipped the neck up to his lips. A noisy swallow ensued and then a belch. "What're you up to, Eastwell?"

"Not a thing, Eddie, not a thing. I just brought back a real news item, and I'm doing you that favor of giving you the big story first. What a favor, too! Wait'll you see."

He maneuvered in the crash-chair, so his body was slightly out of the vid screen's range, and held up the creature with the blue fur. "See him? Great ain't he?"

Glug said, "Glug, glug."

Klugman rolled off the bed, and stood up unsteadily.

"What the hell is *that*?"

"Glug," answered Glug.

"Whaaat?"

"You heard him," snapped Eastwell. "Now listen, Eddie, I want you to start a big news spread on me and this thing here. I'll give you all the poop. I want the world to know about Glug by the time I've landed at Ildewild."

"You're nuts. I won't—"

Eastwell smiled nastily.

Klugman dropped his hands to his sides. The bottle fell from his limp fingers and gurgled its contents against the rug. Cleanomecks purred out of wall-receptacles and mopped up the mess instantly, carrying the bottle with them. Then they scurried away, back to their baseboard homes.

"Okay, Eastwell. I'll-I'll do it. What's the story?" Like a good newspaperman, he slumped onto the bed and took a pad and paper from the night-shelf, began jotting notes as Hobie began:

"Hobie Eastwell, noted explorer and businessman, has returned from space with a marvelous creature so rare and unusual that—"

In his lap, Glug chewed over a piece of golden moss, contentedly. Life was warm and simple. Eat and sleep.

ON THE RIVIERA, with a woman named Darcine whom he had met in the Stardust Casino, Hobie found out he was close to broke. A year and high living had seen the quick depletion of his funds. Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars—translated from credits and plasts—had seemed like a great deal of money. Glug had been bought within a week of his landing at Ildewild, due to the efforts of Klugman and the other

IMAGINATION

fellows of the Third Estate who sensed a big story in the making. Glug had been purchased by Mrs. Amos Guggenheim-Rockwell, Jr. who had oohed and aahed over the little darling from the moment she saw him on nationwide 3-vid. The price was steep, but Mrs. Guggenheim-Rockwell was obviously the ruler of the "400" for that year, and many more to come. So the price was right.

The two thousand dollars a pound Hobie was *forced* to charge for the golden moss was perhaps a bit steep—to Glug's owner—but the little babykins *had* to have his nice nourishing mossie-wossie, didn't he? So Hobie was set for a long time.

A long time. One year and a pair of months.

On the Riviera, having gone to fat; with a woman named Darcine whose bust was just short of fabulous. With a chit for ten thousand dollars in the hands of the owners of the Stardust Casino. A brace of brothers known as the Siciliano Brothers, who were most unpleasant about unpaid debts.

Even from someone as famous as Mr. Eastwell.

So Hobie knew he must ready the *Iris Malachee* for another run to Small Planet BBB-110.

He bade a three-day goodbye between purple satin sheets to the

woman known as Darcine, and blasted off from Cote d'Azur spaceport.

It was not nearly as long a trip this time, for Hobie knew precisely where he was going. And too, he was slightly overweight, and had developed a bad stomach, and these space jaunts were a little too difficult now.

He found his second glug near the same spot he had found the first. He found his third a mile from the second, his fourth and fifth together—eating moss—near the third, and so on, till he had fifteen glugs, and enough moss to feed a herd of the little beasts, should any be of opposite sexes. He stuffed the hold till it could hold no more, and then loaded the empty companionway cabins with it, and then he pitchforked great gobs of it down the breeder reactor chute, where it might freeze during the jaunt, but would thaw in plenty of time to be sold on Terra.

He returned to Terra with an even greater publicity build-up than before, to find his glugs demanded on all sides. In a matter of hours after Idlewild touchdown, Hobie had sold every one of the charming, deliciously lovable creatures, and had contracted for the entire shipment of moss.

It was apparent, however, that one more trip would *have* to be

made. There was not enough moss for all the glugs. For Hobie had, indeed, brought back male and female. He had left Small Planet BBB-110 with fifteen, he had arrived with forty-seven.

The glugs bred quickly and indiscriminately.

It was a scant three days after his return that Hobie was pressed—by the new owners, all of whom were wealthy and demanding—to return for another shipload of golden moss.

He did so reluctantly, and arrived at Small Planet BBB-110 much the worse for wear. This time he used the robomecks he had had installed in the ship, and they loaded the moss in till there was barely room to sleep. All bulkheads had been ripped out, and the living accommodations jammed into the pressurized cab of the *Iris Malachee* to just barely support Hobie till he could return from this final jaunt and settle down permanently.

Hobie fired off with a shipload of the golden moss, and selected a comfortable position in the crash-couch, from which he was determined not to move until he had to. He had to, very soon.

The moss tried to get through the pressure-sealed door between the hold and the cab less than half-way to Terra.

He had been sleeping, and only

the scratching and scrabbling brought him to wakefulness. He peered through the lucite port in the bulkhead, and saw only a great golden expanse of fibers, clawing at the door. The moss was trying to—trying to—he shuddered as he mentally shrieked it—*trying to get in at him!*

THE REST OF THE FLIGHT was a nightmare. He could not rest, but kept watch constantly. The moss was unable to get through the duroplasteel of the bulkhead, but he could hear it scratching away constantly, trying to wear it away. Eventually, it must prevail.

His only hope was to make touchdown at Terra.

That too, was impossible.

When he approached the sector of space where he knew Terra to be, he found only a large golden ball. Where the green and dun, and white circle of Terra had been, now there revolved an orb completely covered by the golden moss.

It was then, after struggling against insanity, that he knew what the situation had *really* been on Small Planet BBB-110.

The Glugs had not been the masters of life on that world. They had been predators. They had maintained the balance on Small Planet BBB-110 between themselves and the omnivorous golden

moss.

The moss was not food, it was life. As alive as the cuddly, lovable glugs. His second shipload of moss had been greater than the number of glugs, even with their fantastic reproducing abilities. They had taken on more than they could chew, literally.

The moss had broken free, and

had devoured the planet. Terra was lost.

And as he realized the scratching on the bulkhead had grown louder, as he saw the first fiber of tendril from the moss appear through a pock in the duroplasteel, Hobie Eastwell, entrepreneur, realized he was lost, too.

THE END



Absolute Zero



A MISCONCEPTION EXISTS even among people who should know better. It is generally believed, often among physics students too, that absolute zero is a point where all molecular motion ceases.

This deduction is based on the observation that as a gas is chilled, more and more of its energy is removed until, it liquifies. Then more energy is further removed by allowing evaporation. By this system scientists easily come within small fractions of a degree of absolute zero.

Temperature is a measure of molecular motion and so it is reasonable to suppose that when the temperature is absolutely zero, all molecular motion has ceased. This facile conclusion is in error. The Quantum Theory takes care of that.

When large aggregates of molecules are studied, and that means when anything at all is studied, only statistical interpretations can come to our coarse-grained senses.

We come to the familiar blur of Heisenberg Principle of Indeterminacy. This is nothing more nor less than the factual statement that we can either know the position of a molecule or its velocity with predetermined accuracy - - BUT NOT BOTH.

This limitation on the knowledge we can have about any one molecule makes it impossible for us to say more about absolute zero than that certain energy - - minute remains to this group of molecules. But one may have more than another. To find this out, the probe we use must be a particle having energy values of the same kind. But using such a probe disturbs the very area we are trying to examine. So we cannot say, "this is the way it is." We must say, "this is the way it is after we've introduced this amount of energy."

Absolute zero is a convenient fiction then to which we can refer. It is a sort of energy level measurer.

It is interesting to note that this

limitation in no way interferes with the amazing results gotten with now standardized equipment. In fact, any laboratory now can purchase a relatively cheap "cryostat" which will carry down to within fractions of a degree of absolute zero consistently. It is refrigerating equipment to end refrigerating equipment.

The greatest promise of studies made at absolute zero lies in the remarkable fact that metal often becomes super conductors of electricity at these low temperatures.

The result is that by refrigerating a circuit properly and then

short-circuiting through it, a tremendous electric current, enormous magnetic fields even though of short duration, can be created.

Knowledge of these magnetic fields is extraordinarily important for they hold the clues to the real nature of matter. When the newer advances which are coming in nuclear physics, are made, it is highly

in the study of high magnetic "spin."

Physics treads on ponderously but certainly. It is a subject which is beginning to say "we can't know it all - - but we can try."



"Sure it'll scare hell out of the Captain—but are you sure this thing understands it's just a joke?"

Haverford knew from his radio contracts he was the last man alive on Earth. His death was certain—for the enemy numbered trillions, a —

Homecoming Horde

by

Robert Silverberg

THE ROOM WAS SEALED as tightly as possible. Haverford had checked it for cracks, made sure the windows were caulked, and now kept constant guard. He was alone. He could never tell when the alien invaders would break through.

I must be nearly the last, he thought. It was strange, this feeling of being alone on Earth. But it was probably true.

The aliens had come six days before. Haverford remembered picking up their ultimatum on his ham set:—

EARTHMEN, THE LANTHAII ARE COMING. BEWARE!

That was all it had been — an ominous warning, rather than a threat or an order. The way the message had been worded left little doubt that they were conquerors — conquerors from space.

Haverford had been amused, at first. A solitary recluse, he had little dealings with his fellow men, at least not in person. The costly ham set that occupied nearly a third of his one-room flat was his sole contact. Through radio he kept in regular touch with “friends” in Yokohama and Buenos Aires, Texas and Oregon, while actually leaving the confines of his own room at increasingly rare intervals.

He had, naturally, picked up the Lanthaii messages on his set. There wasn't an amateur operator in the world that hadn't detected them. That was when he began to feel it wasn't a joke.

Reports came in. Dazo Osaki, the Japanese contact, reported hearing the strange message; Lionel Bentham in Sussex picked it up also, as did Miguel Bartirone in Buenos Aires. **EARTHMEN, THE LANTHAII ARE COMING. BE-**



WARE! Someone — there was no doubt of it — was beaming the message at the entire Earth from *outside*.

And then the Lanthaii had come.

Haverford, pacing his room nervously, remembered the day of their landing. He had been talking to Bentham, the Englishman, a slow-speaking, phlegmatic sort.

“—so I mean to write to my man in Parliament, y’know, and ask him to plump for the legisla-

tion. It’ll be a great boon for ham operators if — Lord! What’s that! *What’s that?*”

Haverford had stared at the transmitter in shocked surprise as Bentham’s voice was replaced with the screeching of static, then some other sounds he did not understand, followed by a quick, sharp, repulsive clicking, and —

Silence.

“Bentham! Bentham!”

Silence.

THAT HAD BEEN the beginning. The Lanthai had landed, all right. The alien invaders were sweeping the world.

Haverford got the details from a news-broadcast. They had come in silvery ships, hundreds of them. Thousands.

"You should have seen it," Bartirone told him, speaking in his accented English. "All over Buenos Aires, in midday — suddenly, the sky was blotted out. Ships. Silvery ships. They seemed small. They started to land."

"Have you seen the invaders yourself?"

"No. Not yet. They haven't come this far west in the city yet. But—"

The Argentinian's voice stopped. Haverford listened numbly, knowing despite himself exactly what had happened. The invaders had come.

He rose, looked around his room. He had enough food in the freezer and on the shelves to last for months. Haverford was a frugal man; by buying in quantity, he saved precious cash that was used for augmenting the radio set.

He decided to hide in his home — to seal it from the outside world, to wait. Perhaps the invaders would be driven back; perhaps Earth would fall. But he would be safe. He would not be killed in the war of conquest.

He made sure there was no way his room could be entered. Just as he was about to nail fast the bolt that held the door shut, he heard knocking.

Three sharp knocks. Haverford leaped for the bolt, drove it home, hung tensely against the door.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Mrs. Kelley," came the reply. He almost fainted from relief. He had expected the aliens — and it was only the landlady. Cautiously, he threw open the door.

"Yes?"

"Have you heard, Mr. Haverford? About the invasion, I mean?"

"Yes, I've heard. What of it?"

"I just thought I'd tell you," she said, shrugging. "I know you don't go out much or read the papers, and I thought maybe—"

"I've heard over the radio," he told her stiffly. "Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"No — not at all."

"Very well, then: If anyone comes to see me, you can tell them I'm not looking for visitors."

"Yes, Mr. Haverford."

She disappeared into the darkness of the corridor. Haverford slammed the door, shot the bolt home, nailed it fast. So far as the outside world was concerned, he was as good as dead.

He set to work sealing himself in.

TWO DAYS PASSED — two W₃XFA.”

days in which gradually, one by one, his contacts here and there over the globe were silenced. Bentham had gone first, then Bartirone. His two Japanese friends were gone now too; the Orient was overrun by the invaders. South America as well.

Word was coming from the States of alien advances. New York was in Lanthaii hands, and no broadcasts were being made from there. The United Nations delegates had fled to an unnamed city and were continuing to talk — to discuss the situation, no doubt, Haverford thought bitterly.

But talk would do no good. Soon the entire world would be in alien hands, and there would be no stopping them. None at all.

Texas went. Oregon. The aliens were obviously working their way toward the center of North America; so far Chicago had reported no alien attacks, but United States forces in the seacoast states had been driven back.

Haverford ate his frozen foods sparingly, and spent long hours at the radio.

One by one his contacts were snuffed out. He ran down the lists in his code book, calling people he hadn't buzzed in years, just trying to hear human voices again.

“Come in, W₃XFA. Come in,

No answer. None at all.

The aliens held all of Asia, most of Europe; he got a brief response from Belgium on the third day, but was unable to pick up the signal an hour later. An underground worker in an Iron Curtain country called him that afternoon — and then he went. The marauders from space covered the globe.

Haverford looked at his map. They were working in an ever-tightening ring. Soon they would be in Chicago. Then the strength of his improvised fortress would be sorely tested.

By the fourth day, he was down to just one contact — a man in upper Illinois, a ham operator out of a Chicago suburb.

“You there, Haverford?”

“I'm here. What do you hear?”

“Nothing. The aliens are everywhere. I can see them from my window, swarming in the streets. They've won, all right. Mankind is defeated.”

“You can see them, eh? Must be a ghastly sight.” Haverford's own window faced the back.

“It is. There must be millions of the ugly beasts, and not a human being in sight. Haverford, who ever expected it would come like this?”

“No one did. No one ever dreamed of it.”

“They must breed fantastically

rapidly if they can send an invasion force of this size. Imagine it, Haverford — a living tide of Lanthaii spilling out from their home world, covering all of the universe and —”

“Yes? I hear you,” Haverford said.

“Something outside my door. It’s *them*, Haverford! It’s *them*!”

The set went dead. Haverford stared dully at it for a moment, then turned it off. There was no one else to talk to. He was alone.

He was the last survivor. Unless there was someone else, cowering in a skyscraper basement somewhere, hiding in a thick field of corn —

But the Lanthaii were methodical killers. They had set out to exterminate the human race, and—

Haverford stiffened. What was that scrabbling, scratching noise in the hall? It sounded like —

He knew what it was. The Lanthaii were coming. They were wiping out the stragglers now, the few like Haverford who had remained alive. They were wiping the Earth clean of life, leaving it bare and ready for them.

The scraping at the door grew louder. The bolt strained; the

hinges started to give. Haverford watched coldly, knowing that he hadn’t done the job well enough. They were going to be able to get through.

A dark line appeared down the center of his door. It began to crack. It yielded.

Haverford turned frantically to his radio set, desperately sending out a call for help. But of course nobody heard him, nobody answered. He was alone and he knew it. Except for *them*.

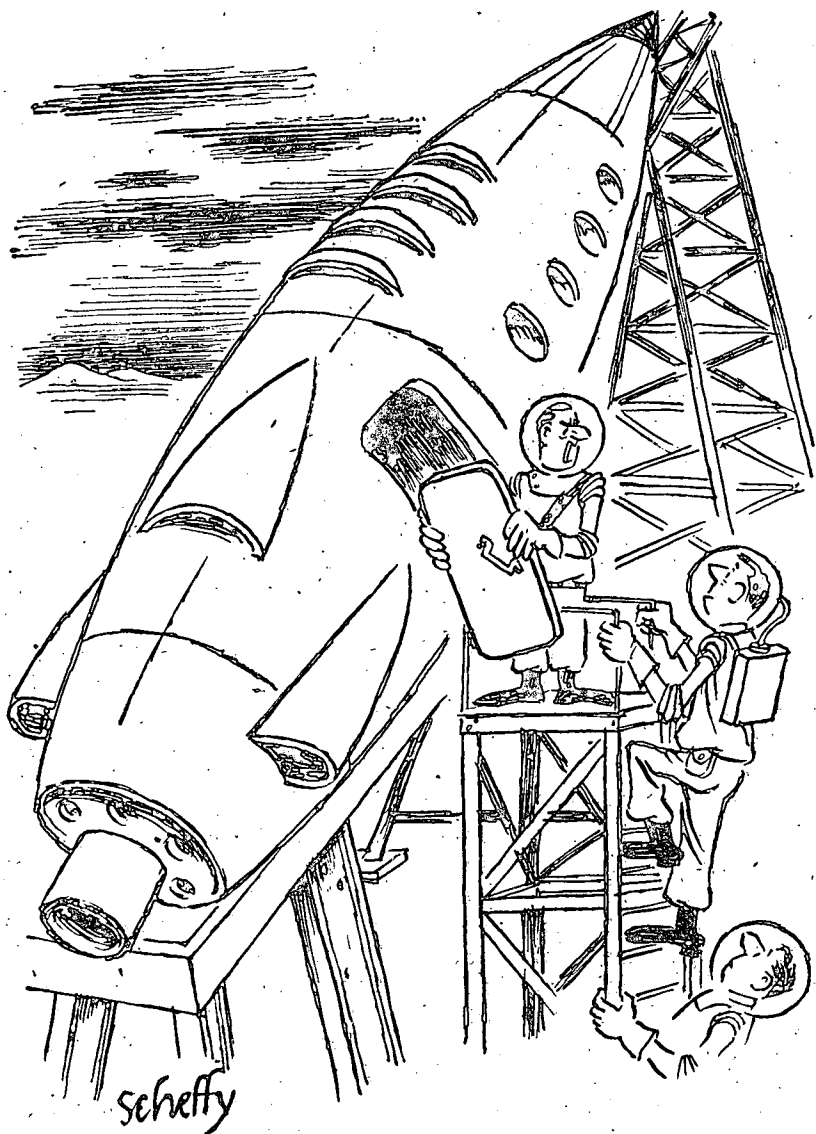
He wheeled to face them, to go down fighting. He looked in horror at them — insects — huge, ugly, and alien. They came on. He backed to the wall. And in the last moment as time seemed to stand still he became aware of an insignificant detail, laughable, yet tragically ironic. A fly buzzed around his head. An earth fly. A pitiful creature; a nothing — an insect.

The fly lighted on the floor a few feet ahead of him, crawling slowly toward the alien horde pouring through the door. And the aliens broke their ranks, passing around the fly, almost respectfully, he thought. Or was it paternally?...

Then they reached him.

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"Go find the designer—and shoot him!"

You'll Like It On Mars!

by

Tom W. Harris

Nobody could figure out how Kettering had shot his realistic scenes on Mars. His movie was just too good to be true — and much too gruesome!

I REMEMBER it all so clearly. "Get the information and you can have anything you want," Myron Ferdinand told me. He stuffed his heavy pipe with five-dollar-an-ounce tobacco and blew a heavy cloud around his heavy face. "Fail to get it, and I'll wash you out of the whole industry."

Myron meant what he said. "I'll get it," I said with beautifully faked confidence.

"Renn Kettering will be glad to see you at his party tonight," Myron grinned. "I planted a rumor that you want to leave me and go to work for him. Maneuver a private talk, get him on the subject of how he made that damned movie. Maybe he'll let something slip."

"Great idea," I said. Movie magnates always have great ideas.

"Talk to his cast. And slip off alone if you can and look his house

over. I don't care what you do, but come back here with the information. And don't get big ideas on selling out to Kettering. He'd hire you to get you away from Stupendous and then dust-bin you because he couldn't trust you. You understand that, of course."

"Of course," I said. Movie magnates are always right.

"One thing more, Manny. I want you to see those steals again."

"I've seen those scenes of his about seven thousand times, Myron."

"So have I—so has the whole country—and between you and me I don't think they're as hot as they're cracked up to be. I'd have done it different. But I want you to see them just before you go to Kettering's party, to have 'em fresh in your mind. Get it?"

"Terrif idea!" I bellowed. "I didn't think of that!"

P. BRUCE BERRY



"That's why I'm president of Stupendous," said Myron.

Modest guy, Myron Ferdinand. "Right," I said, sliding toward the door.

"Remember," said Myron. "Anything you want—or on the other hand, the end of you in Hollywood."

On the way to the preview room I mulled it over. Nice simple assignment. Find out how Renn Kettering of PGP Studios had shot those startling sequences *Mars Hazard*, an international hit. It was super realism—the critics were calling it "Art's answer to the newsreel" and stuff like that. The scenes had been shot on Mars. Renn had fabulous influence. In this case he must have paid off the government itself, because the crew of the third ship to touch the new planet had been mostly his own actors and technicians and Renn himself was along. These factors were known to every hipster. But how had he managed to shoot those . . .

I was at the view room. I signaled the joker in the projection booth and sat down as the first famous sequences came on the screen.

The space crew had left the ship and were in a little ravine when a bunch of tawnies came down on them. There were liver-freezing shots of the tawnies—close-ups—those could have been done with

a telephoto lens. The space crew got behind some rocks, and Vance Hubbard, the film's heavy, stood up and cut loose with a blaster. The blue sparks burst and showered around the big tawny that was coming for Vance, and it howled but didn't stop. Vance hurled the gun at its big sticky mouth, and then the thing grabbed him with its front mandibles, or whatever you call them.

There was a closeup of Vance's face, scrambled with terror, about the best acting I have ever seen from Vance. And, the tawny got those yellow choppers going and minced him into little hunks.

It was all close to the camera, and about the most real thing I ever saw outside of a newsreel. Superb realism.

If I hadn't seen so many murder films and pirate films and space-monster films I suppose I couldn't have kept watching. But me and John Q. Public were just alike—calloused. Calloused or not, I still felt a cold chill or two. If the public wanted horror, this film delivered it.

There were some more hair-raising shots as the crew tried to beat off the tawnies. There was a guy who got in the way of a blaster. I wanted to think he was a rubber dummy or some kind of robot, but I couldn't convince myself. Anyway, the tawnies clean-

ed up. The only one who made it back to the ship was Arden Montgomery, and her legs were ripped and slashed like ragged cloth.

Then the clips were over. I sat and thought a moment. Maybe Myron had a point, watching the steals again. I had picked up an idea. It was crazy, but I needed any idea I could get hold of.

Maybe those scenes were just as real as they looked. Maybe Renn was using doubles here on Earth, and the real cast was scattered in hunks around the bleak sands of the red planet. Renn was unscrupulous enough for something like that. But could he patch up convincing doubles?

I was pretty sure doubles hadn't been used in the film, though. I knew Vance and Arden. It was them.

I kept worrying at it all the way to Renn's house party. I came up with one more idea—one I liked. Arden Montgomery was the only one in the film that escaped. If those scenes were real, she'd have scars on her legs the rest of her life. They'd be too severe to disguise completely. Arden and I had once been what they call "good friends," and tonight I would find a chance to give her legs a good, thorough lookover.

RENN MET ME at the door in person. On the front of his

phony grin, and in the back of his mind was the possibility he might get me away from Myron. The grin didn't change the fact that Kettering has eyes like dry ice, and that the true lines of his face are about as jovial as a shock trooper's.

"Greetings, Gabe!" I chortled.
"Greetings, Gabe!"

I was about to shake hands when I yelled and jumped back about ten feet. Just behind Renn was a snarling tawny.

Renn laughed. "Little watchdog I brought back. He's a runt, you'll notice. Only about five feet high. Weighs about fifteen hundred pounds. He keeps powlers off the grounds at night—so many people are curious these days. But don't worry, he can't get at you."

The runt was tied with steel cables about two inches thick. He was giving the cables a hard time.

"Come on in," laughed Kettering. "Those cables would hold an elephant."

"I don't see what that has to do with holding a tawny," I wheezed, "but if the rest of your guests got through, I guess I can make it."

Kettering took my arm and sort of guided me down the hall, and when we passed the tawny all those eyes or whatever they are, all over its body, glared through the fur and it leaped at me. The big choppers clacked a half inch from my ear and I felt a mandible graze

my coat.

Renn guffawed. "I measured his exact reach," he said chummily. "Sorry if he scared you. A good watchdog—so many people curious these days."

That made the second time he'd said that.

I gulped a drink before I began to talk to anybody. Practically all the Important Crowd was present. . . Dick Lutz, the critic; Sally Flours; Johnny Lambeck of Lambeck & Bowe, and what looked like the whole cast of "Mars Hazard." I was in luck—Arden Montgomery was there with them. I noticed she didn't have a drink, so I brought her one. "Greetings, Gabe" I smirked charmingly, and she gave me the big hello. So far, so good—she was glad to see me.

"What's new, Manny?"

"Nothing," I said, "Except I'm in love with you."

"Wonderful," she said. "I love having people in love with me."

I slid my eyes up her legs, which were exhibited considerably. No sign of scars.

"How was Mars? I hear it's dry and full of itchy green sand and the sky is a pink that'd turn your stomach. And—horrors—no bars!"

"I kinda liked the damned place. Wouldn't mind staying there."

A little voice in the back of my mind said "Hm! Something's fishy."

"I heard it was lousy," I told Arden. "Not to start an argument."

"We liked it. Can't you keep your eyeballs off my legs?"

Matter of fact, I hardly could. From looking for scars, I had passed to just looking. I tried higher up and only got absorbed again. There were some things about Arden, if you overlooked her acting, that were spectacular.

"Who's the girl lately?" she asked.

"Nobody important. Who's the boy?"

She shrugged, and her dress nearly slid off her shoulder. "Nobody important. My drink's gone. Let's go get another."

We wove around people and moved to Kettering's kitchen. It was nice to be with her again, and I could tell she thought so too. And I owed it to myself, my career, and to Myron to stay with her just a bit longer. The fact that I couldn't see any scars didn't prove there weren't any. I would try to get a chance for a more thorough check. The sense of touch versus the sense of sight.

"You people did a wonderful job in 'Mars Hazard,'" I said. "I suppose the party is kind of in your honor." Then I noticed something, and ran my eyes over the crowd to check. "It looks like Renn only invited the actors from the Mars part of the film!"

"It isn't really a party for the whole cast. Some of us happen to be staying out here." That sounded almost as fishy as the I-like-Mars-bit.

"Renn afraid somebody'll get some secrets?" I smiled.

"Could be," she said, with that hazardous shrug. "You weren't going to ask me for any, were you?"

"As a matter of fact I wasn't," I said with disarming frankness. "But I will now. Just how did he make those terrific shots?"

Arden just smiled. It wasn't an answer; but the smile was a nice one. "How about those drinks?"

We decided to go outside with our drinks, to look at the stars, and maybe she could show me the one she'd been to. But Mars wasn't out that night. At least we didn't see it. Maybe because we didn't look too hard. After awhile we went back into the living room, and I had learned something, at least. There weren't any scars on her.

I strolled us over to the group around Kettering. Little Dick Lutz, the critic, was peppering questions at him, and Kettering was loving it.

"I may never make another," he was saying. "Would you ask Shakespeare to write two Hamlets?"

"Then why so quiet about your technique? If you don't want to

use it, let the rest of the boys in."

"That's my secret too," Renn Kettering answered smugly, sipping his drink.

"Look, R. K.," popped Lutz, who was getting nettled, "I hear the secret is out already. People talk."

Kettering laughed. "The secret isn't out—I know it isn't. Like to know how I know?"

"Okay, so how do you know?"

"That's my secret, too."

I thought that Lutz would choke to death. "You used Martians," he said with conviction. "Disguised."

RENN DONNED a look of pain. "That theory is shabby, shabby as the robot rumor. Do you really believe Martians could be disguised that well? And if they could, do you think they'd want to throw their lives away?"

"What do I know about Martians?" Lutz spluttered, but he was beat. It was a shame. There for a minute, I thought he'd come up with something.

I was just about where I'd been when I'd arrived at the party—except perhaps with Arden, which wasn't exactly what Myron sent me for. I hung around near Kettering but he didn't say anything revealing, and finally it was time

to go. Arden and I had been occupied in the kitchen, and I was the last guest.

Renn went with me to the door, slipping past the tawny which jumped at both of us.

"Goodnight, R.K.," I said "It was real."

He put his hand on my shoulder, "You're a great boy, Manny. I've been hearing a lot of nice things about you."

It was coming.

"I do as well as I can," I said modestly.

"I know that," he said, pompous and serious as an old gibbon. "I keep an eye on people. I'd like you to have lunch with me sometime."

In a way, I wished I could work for him. He was heading Up, but def. Myron was right, though. Renn would hire me just to get me away from Stupendous, then pigeon-hole me because he wouldn't be able to trust me.

I let my mouth flop open for just a second. "Why—I'd be delighted. How about tomorrow?"

"Love it, but I'm leaving tomorrow. Let's make it in about a month."

I must have looked surprised, and he said, "We're going back to Mars, you know. Some of the cast liked it so much—may even want to live there. I'm traveling

up with them. The government has another ship going—they've been most accommodating."

Him and his fancy wire-pulling. "Oh," said I. "Well, whenever you say. It's been a delightful evening." The hell it had.

"Thank you," said Kettering. "Goodnight, now. Be careful going across the grounds, Manny. I let my little watchdog out in about ten minutes."

"Uh," I said expressively. "Well, goodnight."

His big gates opened ahead of the car and shut behind it, and I drove down the road a little and parked. Would Myron want to wait a month before I could even see Kettering again? I mulled awhile, picked up the dash phone, and rang up Myron. He was sore when he answered—apparently I'd interrupted something—and sore when I got through talking. When I hung up I had received an ultimatum—get the dope, get it now, or.

Well, I did look forward to keeping my job, which financed a blonde, a brunette, and two cars. I couldn't let all those dependents down.

I am much opposed to hard thinking, but I decided to do some. Finally I snuffed up an idea. Just to show you what hard thinking leads to, it was the idea that changed everything.

Renn was much too cool to show the secret. But the cast had to be in on it. And there was this liking this Mars business, and the trip back there, and all that jazz.

I would sneak back to the house and spy on the actors and actresses. Preferably the actresses. Only, of course, because they talk more.

I DROVE BACK with the lights out and parked by the big gate. I didn't see anything of the tawny. The gate was made of upright iron bars, sharp-pointed at the tips, and I climbed up. The bars were set loosely into holes in the cross-pieces, resting solid on the bottom crosspiece but not welded. I worked one out. A spear. Too heavy to throw at a tawny or anybody else, but I remembered a movie I saw as a kid, back when they had jungle movies. The jokers in this movie had done something I might do with the tawny.

I climbed down inside the grounds and started toward the house, where a couple of lights were on. The moon was low and very bright. I didn't crouch or skulk along. I figured the tawny would spot me sooner or later, and I'd rather it *didn't happen* when my back was turned and I was looking in a window.

I began to sweat a little.

I was about halfway to the house when I saw the tawny. It was com-

ing toward me, from behind the house a quarter-mile away. I crouched and started a trot, and that seemed to attract it. It came in long, clumsy bounds, and I could hear it huffing.

It was time to try the stunt from the old movie. The flick showed some jungle joes hunting boar. This character was kneeling on the ground with a spear in his hands. The butt was braced against the ground and the point was toward the boar. The boar was charging. The idea seemed to be that it would spit itself.

The tawny was close and I ran. I wanted him coming at a nice clip when he hit my spear. I was between him and the moon, which I hoped would keep him from seeing what he was running into.

I glanced over my shoulder and he was almost on me, coming like a roller-coaster. I whirled, knelt, and raised the pointed rod.

The tawny took a terrific bound. I guess he thought he had me. He went right over me, right over the spear, hit the ground and started rolling.

I got my legs going, covering ground in the opposite direction. Glancing back, I saw the tawny getting up. His mouths were opening and closing, but he wasn't making any noise. Couldn't, I guess, because of some Earth difference, or his wind knocked out. It was

obvious that he wanted to.

This time he came like two roller-coasters and probably a rocket. I jammed the butt of my spear down solid and shut my eyes. There was a big thud, I opened my eyes. He had run the bar right through him and was still coming, sliding right on down it. There was a hissing and rushing, and clouds of violet vapor spurting from the puncture in him.

I got the hell out of there. Finally I stopped running and looked back. He was staggering in ragged rings, his mouth gnashing at the bar, moving slower and slower like a machine running down. He stumbled into some little bushes, tangled, toppled, and there was a thrashing. The air stunk with the escaping vapor. The thrashing quieted.

I could go on to the house.

I picked the nearest window and it was the right one. Arden and the rest were in there, moving around, changing clothes, packing, and talking. They were talking about Mars, and how badly they wanted to go back there. They seemed a little sorry about the people they wouldn't be seeing any more, and Arden mentioned me.

But that was all I got to hear. There was a rustle in the bushes and I whirled to see the tawny coming at me, with the iron bar

still sticking through it and the puncture sealed by something like scar tissue.

The tawny, had its voice back and was howling like a ten-ton tea-kettle. I heard some yells inside the house. Then the beast was on me and I felt the choppers starting. I don't suppose many people these days are familiar with the sensation of being chopped up fine. It isn't pleasant. But it didn't last long. I passed out.

NOW THIS IS CORNY, but when I woke up I figured I had arrived wherever it is you arrive when you get through dying. But then I saw Renn Kettering. I didn't think he'd arrive at the same place I would; at least not the same suburb. Unless, of course, he was running the place. So maybe I hadn't died at that.

I saw I was in some kind of room, in bed, and Renn was standing on the bed. I pinched myself. I was real.

"Welcome to Mars," said Renn.

I sat up. I was in a hut made of little stones, reeds and holes. I glimpsed bits of a green sand desert, pink sky and yellow clouds.

"The tawny tore you up," said Renn, which was no news to me.

"Luckily, we got you up here in time," Renn continued. "You'll be wanting to stay, of course."

I remembered all I knew about

the Mars scene. I leaped from bed, putting it between me and Renn.

"Like hell I will!"

"Oh, you'll stay, just like the others."

It was coming a little fast. "Slow down," I said. "I got torn up, and here I am, sound in wind and limb. That's what happened to the others? That's the secret of how you shot those realistic scenes?"

"Check," said Renn. "But I won't bore you with the whole long story."

"I love to hear you talk," I said, drooling at the thought of what Myron Ferdinand would do for me when I told him the story.

"Well," said Renn, "it's really because of the Martians. As you know, they aren't awfully advanced—or maybe they've retrogressed—but they do have some wonderful things in medicine. Their medicine, or whatever it is, works on body cells. You've heard about the lizards that grow a new tail when the old one is cut off? Or a lobster growing a new claw? Well, all living body cells, including human, have some of what they call regenerative power. With most animals it's faint; about all it does is produce scar tissue or replace a few cells like a bit of skin, for example. But the Martians can hype up this process so you can grow practically a whole new body.

Arm, leg, liver or lights, rip 'em off and you can grow 'em back. But there's one catch in it."

"Yah," I said.

"Yah," he said. "Just like Hollywood. In this case the catch is this—when you grow back, you're a Martian. You're still you—but different. It began to show up in our cast in about ten days. Maybe the new cells are part Martian, or pick up something from the medicine or treatment or whatever it is. Anyway, you want to live on Mars. Pretty soon you have to live on Mars. You don't like it any place else anyway. But you like it here."

I lay back then and shut my eyes.

I still remember it all so clearly, how I felt as I lay on the bed, and all the rest of the story. But I don't feel now the way I did when Renn gave me the word. Not at all.

I make a very nice salary working for Renn up here—mostly newsreels and a few dramas, although even with the medicine nobody will volunteer to make a show where the tawnies tear them up. And there are some very nice things about being a Martian. Arden is even more interesting now that we both have three more senses. And Mars is wonderful. No lousy bars, and that dead, dry, marvelously itchy green sand.

A department for all our readers throughout the world; here you can meet new friends who are interested in the same things you are. Listings are free, so send in yours today!

STUDENT

Joel Light: 999 Portola Dr., Monterey, Cal.

Age 14: "I'm a freshman in high school, interested in s-f, psi powers, and the possibility of extra-terrestrial life. Hobbies include stamp collecting, dancing, and swimming. Hope to hear from guys and gals my age."

STUDENT

Lois David: 2370 64th St., Brooklyn 4, N.Y.

Age 15: "I would like to hear from others interested in pop music, dancing, writing, ESP and physical sports such as swimming and skating. I like to make up crossword puzzles and exchange them by mail. I plan to study medicine in school."

NAVY MAN

Ronald D. Gear: AN 487-32-84, AT-

A School S-238 W-5, NATTC, Memphis 15, Tenn.

Age 18: "I enjoy science fiction and would like to correspond with other fans. I also enjoy modern music."

PAPER MILL WORKER

Charles R. Mann: David's Motel & Apts., Port St. Joe, Fla.

Age 24: "I'm married, and have two children. I'm interested in s-f, electronics, aviation, and writing. I work for a paper mill locally."

STUDENT

Toney Atkins: P.O. Box 58, Chickamauga, Ga.

Age 15: "I'm a high school freshman interested in astronomy, s-f movies and stories, pop music, writing, and am a firm believer in flying saucers. Hope to hear from other fans my age."

BOOKKEEPER

Margaret Ann Rodgers: 347 W. Spazier Ave., Burbank, Cal.

Age 26: "I love sports, both indoor and outdoor, and animals. Have my own horse, dog, four parakeets, and a siamese tomcat. I collect stamps, coins, bills, postcards, miniature wine & liquor bottles, books and maps. Hope to hear from others soon."

STUDENT

Raymond Potterf: Box 131, Colby, Kansas.

Age 16: "I am interested in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, human physiology, s-f, and natural phenomena. Currently working on spectroscopic and hydroponic research. Have a tape recorder. Hope others will contact me."

MARINE

Pvt. Henry K. Allen: 1684352, TTOC #6, OP. COMM. SCOL. CO., C & E Bn. MCRD, San Diego 40, Cal.

Age 19: "I'm wide open with my interests, particularly rock 'n roll, s-f, UFO, and generally anything not easily explained. Hope fans will write me."

SOLDIER

Daniel J. Immediato: SP/3, US 51-374-275, Company E, 4th Training Rgmt., Fort Dix, N.J.

Age 21: "I'm an s-f fan, with current interests the army—but others including painting, sculpture, sports, and dancing. Hope I'll hear from s-f fans with like interests."

STUDENT

Tom Milton: 324 17th St., Dunbar, West Va..

Age 14: "I'm interested in s-f, studying science—biology, and enjoy writing letters. Hope other fans my age will write."

HOUSEWIFE

Frances L. Light: 3715 N. Marshfield, Chicago 13, Ill.

Age 33: "I'm a housewife, and have two sons. I enjoy s-f and anything related to it. I also collect stamps. Will look forward to hearing from others—anywhere!"

STUDENT

Russ Bowers: 5500 60th St., Sacramento, Cal.

Age 17: "I'm interested in s-f, travel, rock'n roll, calypso, and sports, particularly ice skating. Hope other fans with same interests will write me."

BEAUTICIAN

Miss Stasiann Kozik: Rt. 2, Vitale Trail, Bound Brook, N.J.

Age 21: "I'm a beautician, with hobbies including writing letters, reading, traveling, dancing, and sports. Also like s-f, movies, and TV."

STUDENT

Ramon Lar: 75 Bourdon Blvd., Woonsocket, R.I.

Age 18: "My interests are varied, ranging from sculpture to creative writing. (The kind nobody under-

stands but the author!) I'd like to hear from other s-f fans."

STUDENT

Marshall Wilcoxon: 128 N. 11th Ave., Canton, Ill.

Age 14: "I mostly like s-f, astronomy, sports, rock'n roll, and horror movies. Will write to anyone who drops me a line."

FACTORY EMPLOYEE

Florence E. Walters: 8 Fay St., Taunton, Mass.

Age 22: "I work in a watchband factory days, and attend night school. My interests include UFO, time travel, and legends of Atlantis. I'm a collector of cat figurines, stamps, and records. Hope others in my age group will write."

STUDENT

Zenny Hybke: 318 Marquette St., La Salle, Ill.

Age 13: "I like s-f, and would enjoy trading s-f mags with guys and gals. Interests include tropical fish, some types of rock'n roll, fishing, and horror movies."

STUDENT

Sherry Barr: 5574 Van Buren, Chicago 44, Ill.

Age 14: "I'm interested in s-f and science, especially astronomy. Hope guys and gals my age will write."

AUTO MECHANIC

David E. Schnyer: 118 N. Burgher

Ave., Staten Island 10, N.Y.

Age 21: "I'm an auto mechanic by trade, with interests including s-f, stock car racing, motorcycles, and writing letters. Will answer all mail."

TELEPHONE CO. CLERK

Arlene Horowitz: 8746 23rd Ave., Brooklyn 14, N.Y.

Age 18: "My nickname is Shorty because I'm only 5 feet tall! I like pop records, and have a fairly large collection. Enjoy wrestling, roller derbys, and hockey on TV, and like all types of s-f. Am also a flying saucer fan."

STUDENT

George Wagner: 46 Harrison Ave., Bellevue, Ky.

Age 16: "I'm interested in s-f, UFO, science (chemistry), and space flight. I collect many things, including s-f. Hope to hear from other fans in this country and abroad."

COOK

Richard D. McMullen: 321 Knob Hill Ave., Redondo Beach, Cal.

Age 22: "I'm a cook in a local restaurant. Like s-f, time travel ideas, and ESP. Also space flight. Am a novice at chess and would like to correspond with others on the subject."

STUDENT

Miss Pat Burke: 7532 Krause Ave., Oakland 5, Cal.

Age 17: "I'm a high school student, and my interests include s-f,

extra-terrestrial life, music of varied types, sports cars, physiology, and dancing. I hope to hear from young people in any part of the world."

SOLDIER

Charles Szalay, SP2: Hq. & Hq. Co., 6th A/C, Fort Knox, Ky.

Age 24: "I'm presently doing supply work, and some radio & TV in the army. I'm interested in s-f, with other interests including electronics, books, and astronomy. Will look forward to hearing from others with similar interests."

COLLEGE STUDENT

James Cook: Men's Dorm., Morris Harvey College, Charleston, West Va.

Age 22: "I am majoring in business administration. Interested in ESP and hypnosis. Hobbies include swimming, music, and traveling. Hope to hear from other s-f fans."

GERMAN FAN

Manfred Alex: Schwabische Str. 3, Berlin W30, Germany.

Age 17: "I'm a member of the Science Fiction Club Europa, interested in all types of s-f, but particularly time travel. I like popular music, particularly your Elvis Presley, ESP, astronomy, and collecting s-f books and magazines. Would like to hear from American fans."

STUDENTS

Stanley Berkowitz: 10 Kilsyth Rd., Brookline, Mass. & Arnold Huber-

man: 1895 Beacon St., Brookline, Mass.

Age 15: "We are writing together since our interests coincide. We are s-f fans, interested in UFO, strange happenings in general, hypnotism, and ESP. We would like to exchange ideas with other fans."

FACTORY WORKER

Miss Mary Jane Wilkey: 520 N. Thomas St., Gilman, Ill.

Age 22: "I work in a local factory. My interests include horses, movie stars, music of various types, and sports like basketball and football. I like dancing, TV, s-f, travel, and general reading. I would like to hear from fans in the Southwest and Farwest particularly."

STUDENT

Gary Neal: 1803 Siam Rd., Elizabethton, Tenn.

Age 16: "I'm a high school student with interest in sports such as swimming and diving. My main source of reading is s-f, and I'd like to hear from other fans."

SOLDIERS

SP3 Douglas O. Clark, Pfc Donald G. Martin, SP2 Maynard G. Person: Co. A, 8th US ARMY SIG. L.L. Bn. APO 59, San Francisco, Cal.

"We three buddies have the same interests over here in the Korea-Japan area. We like s-f, sports, music, electronics, and hunting. Most of all we like to write letters. Hope s-f fans will contact us—guys and gals."

Conducted by Robert Bloch

WHAT WAS THE FIRST science fiction story you ever read?

My first was *Revolt of the Pedestrians*, by David H. Keller, M.D., which appeared in **AMAZING STORIES** almost thirty years ago. It was a typical example of the early "extrapolation" technique in which Dr. Keller depicted a world so mechanized—so automotivated, if I may counterfeit a phrase—that human legs were atrophied through disuse, and everyone ran around in the equivalent of wheelchairs. Though my memory is somewhat hazy on exact details, I'm pretty certain that a handsome hero and heroine were involved, and able to use their legs, and that they became leaders in a revolt against the crippling dictatorship of the disabled, and saved the world from dire—or pedal—extremities. I don't

think Keller's premise had a leg to stand on, and he didn't even use footnotes, but it was an exciting yarn, a sort of a fable in the Paul Bunion tradition. (But enough of corny puns.)

At any rate, I became a science fiction convert. I soon discovered that I could find science fiction in my local library; *The Time Machine*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, the Jules Verne books, and other items. Being a naive child (strange as it may seem to those who know me today only as a naive adult) I thought that science fiction was just another branch of imaginative literature, and worthy of consideration as such.

I soon discovered just how wrong I was. My friends told me so and my teachers told me so. Science fiction was "trash." It belonged in

the same category as those lurid Sunday supplement features about Japan waging war on America, and splitting the atom for power, and descriptions of a marvelous future world where there would be television in every home.

But I continued to read science fiction in adolescence, and I soon found stories which carried far more conviction than Dr. Keller's tale of a sedentary civilization. Some of the ideas—involving the use of robots and automation, concerning advances in aircraft and rocket projectiles, and dealing with intricate supersonic devices—seemed quite plausible to me. But not to my high school instructors in the early Thirties, not to my sophisticated young companions.

I learned to avoid talking about the things I read. I learned not to even display the magazines to strangers. It wasn't fear of ridicule; just a dislike of getting involved in the arguments which inevitably resulted.

As I grew older and began writing stories myself, I became aware of the science fiction field in terms of fan activity and professional activity, and I learned that I was not alone in my dilemma. Other writers and other readers were exposed to the constant embarrassment of being labelled as crackpots by all the sane, sensible devotees of Tarzan, Doc Savage, The Lone Ranger, and Dick Tracy. To them, science fiction fans were merely people who irrationally preferred to worship at the shrines of Buck Rogers or Superman.

Any attempt to tell them that

good science fiction often offered excellent social commentary plus plausible prophecy and perceptive prediction was dismissed as utter nonsense.

As a result, science fiction fans developed a neurotic pattern of defense-mechanisms. Some retreated into introversion. Some were apt to overcompensate with aggressive, even egomaniac declarations that fans were superior, star-begotten beings who would inherit the future due to super-intellectuality. But whether they attacked or retreated, all fans did their best to rationalize the sorry fact—which was that science fiction devotees were considered outsiders. "Serious" scientists, "serious" literary critics, and "serious" followers of football and bowling just refused to regard their tastes as normal.

Pretty soon, in fanzines and fan-activity in general, there was a recognized trend towards self-ridicule. Fans began to admit that they were "different"—and despite their honest protests, the sorry fact remained that in our social order, to be "different" was generally equivalent to being *inferior*. It was by no means the healthiest situation in the world.

Then came the war.

Where were you when the Bomb hit the fan?

I remember where *I* was—in the midst of an earnest discussion of the value of contemporary literature as a reflection of our times, in which it was being argued that William Faulkner, by virtue of his endless examination of idiocy, miscegenation, rape and murder

amongst rural denizens of the Deep South was offering a valuable contribution to writing which accurately mirrored the problems of a segment of our society today.

I mildly announced that science fiction, with its accurate forecast of atomic warfare, probably exemplified a much more accurate and valid contribution.

But what was going on in "the war" seemed almost a fantasy in itself to the folks on the home-front. My argument didn't get off the ground.

During the years that followed, I—and I'm sure a lot of my fellow-fans as well—waited patiently for a general recognition of science fiction as we entered into an era which realized so many of the predictions it had made. Came radar, the breaking of the sound-barrier with jet flight, came atomic power for civilian use, came television, came cybernetic machines, came serious rocket research on a large scale.

And still science fiction was "trash" to an age which sought intellectual enrichment and spiritual enlightenment in such diverse or allied sources as Pogo, Mary Worth, Wyatt Earp, or the profundities of Mickey Spillane, James Jones and Jack Kerouac.

Thanks, in part, to the writings of the latter gentlemen and a score of similar literary artists, a popular Cult of Ignorance came into being. Teen-agers grumbled and rumbled, but turned away from knowledge. College students eschewed the white robes of the scientist and the black gown of the professor, and

went shopping for gray flannel suits. Adults had no time for reading and little interest in learning. Of course there were many exceptions to this generalization—but the point is, the generalization itself became more or less "official," in that the forces controlling our tastes and interests through advertising and propaganda spent most of their effort and money in creating a favorable picture of the Average Joe as an ideal citizen. There was an open and concerted attempt to belittle "eggheads" and insinuate that most intellectuals were either political or sexual deviates; possibly both.

Then came the Geophysical Year.

ALL AT ONCE the general public learned, to its surprise, that the government was actively interested in rockets, in satellites, in the possibilities of space-travel.

Now, as any well-informed (par-don the egghead word; I meant "hip") member of this public knows, a scientist is a guy who does television commercials to sell pile remedies, and a business man goes in for these newfangled machines to make money, and the government spends its dough for defense weapons.

And yet here was a real gasser; the government was going to spend a fortune trying to send up a satellite or reach the moon—real gone science fiction jazz, and not a chance to make a fast buck in the whole deal!

It was then, I think, that science fiction started to come into its own.

Russia sent up a Sputnik.

Russia sent up a second Sputnik. We flopped.

Then we sent one up. And by the time this appears in print four months from now, there undoubtedly will be further developments.

Already we have seen the general reaction of horror, hysteria, and hokum, as our "sensible" military, economic, scientific, social and intellectual leaders suddenly realize that yesterday's "trash" is today's reality—and that unless we can induce some of our young people to spend more time with logarithms than rock-'n-roll rhythms, tomorrow may be a sorry day indeed.

Now just where does that leave us, as science fiction fans?

It leaves us, for the first time in the history of the field, in the enviable position of being able to abandon any pretense or defense in connection with our hobby. It is no longer necessary to be either apologetic or apoplectic concerning our interest in what is demonstrably a significant segment of today's literature.

Naturally, there's no point in losing perspective. Second-rate, third-rate, and fourth-rate science fiction is still being written today. And there is a legitimate market for and a legitimate interest in pure "space-opera" and science-fantasy offered as escape entertainment.

But we don't have to accept that "escapist" label as applying to *all* science fiction any longer, or to *all* readers.

The time has come, as fans, when we can legitimately refuse to back down before the claims of those who pretend to assign fixed values

to so-called "mainstream" writing, and to uphold our notion that adventures in atoms are every whit as important as adventures in adultery.

More important, we can take a stand on this "egghead" question. For years I too have been a moral coward in that respect; I have often (for the sake of social amenity, I told myself) maintained discreet and humble attitude about my interests, and writing when in the presence of a roomful of Average Joes whose only integer of importance was who owned the newest and biggest automobile, and—

But I'm sure you get the point.

It's not that I want to see science fiction fandom become "dedicated" or puffed up with self-importance through association, either. I do believe the time has come when we can forget the attitudes of a persecuted minority and speak up for our own beliefs as to the value of imaginative literature and *our own imaginations*.

Democracy is an admirable concept—but it is a *political* concept, legally enforced and socially conditioned. There is no *physical* democracy—men are not born *physically* equal; there are the tall and the short, the fat and the lean, the weak and the strong. We accept this fact, in spite of our democratic notions; we have always admired the strong and often ridiculed the weak, and no one finds it inconsistent with our *political* beliefs in equality.

Well, there's no such thing as *intellectual* democracy, either. There are the bright and the stupid, the

alert and the dull. Tragically enough, many of us have come to accept—or at least pay lip-service to—the notion that any moron with money is “just as good as” a college professor, and probably a whole lot “smarter.” If *good* means *politically equal*, yes; and if *smarter* means *wealthier*, yes. But a blind acceptance of these values leads to stagnation—and can lead us to disaster.

No, I believe it's about time somebody had the courage to announce that there is such a thing as intellectual *superiority*, just as there is physical and financial superiority. And to take pride in attaining it; just as the physically weak take pride in developing their health and strength, and the financially impoverished take pride in making a fortune.

I, for one, have made my last apology for my tastes and interests to the self-satisfied clods of this world. I have a small talent at best, but I intend to take some small pride in it, rather than continue to defer to the value-pattern of those who read one book a year and come away with a sprained mouth from moving their lips.

God forbid that we should get “serious” about ourselves or about fandom—let's keep it on the fun-level. But I think it's high time we took advantage of our present opportunity to enjoy our hobby and interests without self-consciousness in the presence of “realistic” baseball fans.

End of sermon. Start of fanzines. INNUENDO (Terry Carr, 2315 Dwight Way, Berkeley 4, Calif.:

irreg.: available by trade or letters of comment.) A huge INNISH, 84 modestly unnumbered pages of Californated fan-fare, including material by Dave Rike, Ron Ellik, Carl Brandon, Pete Graham, lengthy reports on the Oklacon and the London Convention, an interesting vignette by Harry Warner, Jr., the concluding chapters of THE CACHER OF THE RYE, and cartoons by Rike, Rotsler and English. An exceptionally well-produced issue of general interest and special entertainment.

THE VINEGAR WORM No. 2 (Bob Leman, 2701 S. Vine St., Denver 10, Colo.: irreg.: free) is, by contrast, a mere 11 pages. But it's the new version of THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF OCULENTERATOLOGY, and if you happen to recall how I flipped over *that* one, you won't be too surprised to know that I'm still acrobatically about this insignificant but significant opinionzine with a humorous slant. Most of the material is produced by the editor, and I have only one word of comment to offer: *viz.*, hooray!

YANDRO No. 60 (the Coulsons, 105 Stitt St., Wabash, Indiana: monthly: 10c, 12/\$1) comes out more regularly than grandpa's false teeth, and here we have the Fifth ANNISH with a handsome Dollens cover and a nice fat lineup of regular and irregular contributors. There's a special supplement, too; SLAG, a take-off on the rough-gruff-tough men's magazines, perpetrated by James R. Adams and Thomas Stratton. I liked it (Also No. 61, just in).

SIGBO No. 5 (Jerry DeMuth, 1936 Sheridan Rd., Evanston, Ill.: quarterly: 15c, 2/25c) offers 45 pages, mostly devoted to SF movies—even the editor of this column manages to get into the act. But Arthur Mordred's **THE HORROR CYCLE**, a lovely satire dealing with how Hollywood would handle H. P. Lovecraft, steals the issue—and wins my heartiest recommendations.

ABERRATION No. 3 (Kent Moomaw, 6705 Bramble Ave., Cincinnati 27, O.: irreg.: trade or comment) packs John Berry, Ted White, Bill Pearson, Vernon McCain, Dean A. Grennell, Adam Ehrlich and Keith Nelson into a single issue, with Rike, Atom and Bourne illos. Lots of provocative discussion here, with the emphasis on a symposium dealing with fandom as a hobby.

OOPSLA No. 23 (Gregg Calkins, 1068 Third Ave., Salt Lake City, Utah: bi-monthly: 15c, 4/50c) brings us Walt Willis and Vernon McCain with their regular and rewarding columns, a story by John Berry, and another one of those damned articles Bloch is always writing about conventions. In spite of which OOPS manages to hold its deserved place in the Top Ten listing of fanzines.

CRY OF THE NAMELESS No. 111 (the Busbys, Box 92, 920 3rd Ave., Seattle, Wash.: monthly: 10c, 12/\$1) also boasts an **ANNISH** this time around. In fact it's their eighth anniversary, and the 'zine is so well-established that subscribers got 378 pages for their money last year, according to the editorial plug. A lithoed cover offers photo-

graphs of the Seattle Beanie Brigade and there are 42 pages of discussion, review, letters, and assorted fiction to uphold the tradition of the Nameless Ones.

VOID No. 11 (the Benfords, 10521 Allegheny Drive, Dallas 29, Texas: irreg.: 25c or letters of comment) offers a Berryarn and editorial musings as the expatriate Benford Boys return to the United States—or, at least, to Texas. They promise future publication every six weeks or less.

BALLAST No. 1 (Jim Broschart, 131 West Park Ave., Apt. 2B, State College, Penn.: irreg.: no cost) is a newcomer produced by the Penn State SF Society, and this issue contains two specially charming items—a takeoff on SF TIMES and a Book Club ad, both of which I recommend to the discriminating. Or even the indiscriminating.

SPHERE No. 6 (L. T. Thorndyke, P.O. Box 196, Cantonment, Fla.: bi-monthly: 20c, 6/\$1) is chiefly distinguished this time around for an account of a visit with the Linards in their native haunts. Sercon fanfiction and artwork, too, but a dirty pro is hardly in a position to render objective criticism of same.

TWIG No. 7 (Guy Terwilleger, 1412 Albright St., Boise, Idaho: irreg.: 15c, 2/25c) has an interesting contest going—see the 'zine itself for details. See it also for an article by Rog Phillips and a somewhat complementary bit by Honey Wood, in order to comprehend this “fans are also people” theme which presently preoccupies editor Terwilleger. A thoughtful and thought-provoking issue.

RETRIBUTION No. 9 (John Berry, 31 Campbell Park Ave., Belmont, Belfast, Northern Ireland: quarterly: 15c) is the unmusical organ of the Goon Defective Agency, that mouldy figment of a fannish imagination. Together with co-editor and illustrator Arthur Thomson, the same address perpetrates **VERTAS**, also 15c, and has just put out **THE THOMSON SAGA** (15c) which is an account of illustrator Thomson's visit to Ireland by Berry. All three of these 'zines feature Thomson artwork, Berry articles, and an air of good humor. If you are familiar with British fandom, there's much of interest here; if not, this is one way to become acquainted.

TRIODE No. 12 (Eric Bentcliffe: send subs. to Dale R. Smith, 3001 Kyle Ave., Minneapolis 22, Minn.: irreg.: 7/(\$1) is really an extended and extensive con-report this time, and highly informative, too.

METROFAN (David MacDonald, 39 E. Fourth St., New York 3, N.Y.: monthly: 50c per year) also offers some views on the recent Convention—particularly in regard to the American contingent. Being the unofficial publication of the New York Fandom Council, composed of three sf clubs in the New York area, this 'zine could well become an important source of fannews from the East Coast, that fabulous realm of Montagu and Capulet, Martin and Coy, cowboy and Indian. Better get it; you can't tell the feudists without a scorecard.

REVISED LIST OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY FILMS

is not a fanzine, strictly speaking, but a special publication (Walt Lee, Jr., 2519 Armacost Ave., Los Angeles 64, Cal.: one-shot: \$1) which contains a comprehensive listing of approximately 1600 motion pictures, American and foreign, in the sf and fantasy field. It's multilithed, runs to about 75 pages, and contains data—production details, cast credits, sometimes brief descriptive matter—on every movie the editor could track down in well over a year of concentrated research. I've not seen the finished job as yet, but have had the pleasure of looking over the entries as they were completed in rough draft, and I found it a unique and invaluable source of information to anyone who is interested in the field.

Incidentally, while we're straying from fanzine reviews for a moment, I'd like to take a brief paragraph to explain the matter of "out-of-date mentions" brought up by some correspondents. This column appears in a bi-monthly magazine, which goes to press two months before publication. Because of these physical and temporal conditions, it is inevitable that any fanzines reviewed here will have been published four or five months earlier. It isn't that I don't get around to reading them—indeed, I make it a practice to read every fanzine as soon as it reaches me—but the production schedule of **IMAGINATION** prevents an earlier printing of reviews.

Okay? Then back to business.

POLARITY (the Busbys, 2852 14th Ave. West, Seattle 99, Wash.:

highly irreg.: 15c) is distinguished from CRY OF THE NAMELESS in that it is the *personal* fanzine of the editorial duo, rather than a club venture—a matter I probably should have made more clear in my review of CRY. Anyway, this is a genuine BUSBYZINE and to people who like them (and I do) this is sufficient recommendation. Just to make it officially a fanzine, it contains a John Berry article. Plus other interesting material, to boot—or to read. Incidentally, I wonder if there are any John Berry completists in fandom; that is, people who make it a point of collecting everything John Berry writes? Or doesn't anybody live in a 27-room house? Might be worth making the move.

George Wells, Box 486, Riverhead, N.Y., seeks contributions for a new fanzine with the intriguing title, *THE SICK ELEPHANT*; amateur and neo mss. welcomed. He also asks how my name is pronounced. Well, George, it rhymes with "shock." Appropriately.

Here's an opportunity to put in a plug for the Ninth Annual Midwescon, that fabulous fan-gathering, which will be held June 28-29 at the North Plaza Motel, 7911 Reading Road, Cincinnati 37, Ohio. No dues, no membership fees, just the usual informal get-together sponsored by Ohio fandom for all fandom. Make your reservations directly with the motel, and it's best to do it well in advance. Fun and games for George Young and old alike.

Time now to remind you of the 1958 World Science Fiction Convention—the Solacon, scheduled for

Labor Day Weekend in Los Angeles, at the Hotel Alexandria. Membership fees (\$1 to non-attendees) will bring you a Progress Report containing all the latest details. Send your money—do it now, before deflation!—to treasurer Rick Sneary, 2962 Santa Ana St., South Gate, California.

Already, plans are being made for next year's Convention, with several cities rumored to be bidding for the site, and both Detroit and Chicago actively campaigning.

As we go to press, I've had no direct request from Detroit to make any statements here—though I'd be happy to give them the use of the hall if they'd like to do so. But Chicago has approached me for a chance to mention their plans, and I'll do so now, in quasi-quotes from a letter recently received.

Their bid will be sponsored by the CHICAGO SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE, a large and active fan club whose president is Fritz Leiber, wellknown sf author. Chicago's last Convention, in 1952, was the all-time biggest, and one of the best. Plans for 1959 lay special emphasis on the physical comfort of attendees, and call for a program which will cater to fannish interests and sensibly scheduled rather than jumbled together in a miscellany. They have the manpower, the enthusiasm, and the experience, and are openly soliciting votes.

If any other bidders would like a hearing in this column, rush the dope to me and I'll try to oblige immediately.

Now time off for another 60 days of fanzine reading! —Robert Bloch

— REVIEWING CURRENT SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS —

Conducted by Henry Bott

Hard cover science fiction is booming and many fine novels and anthologies are available at all bookstores or by writing direct to the publishers. Each month IMAGINATION will review one or more — candidly — as a guide to your book purchases.

DOOMSDAY MORNING

by C. L. Moore, 216 pages, \$2.95, Doubleday and Company, Garden City, New York

Every observer of the social scene notes the increasing conformity of people, the uniformity of tastes and attitudes, and attributes them logically to the concentration of communication facilities into the hands of the few "taste-setters".

In a beautifully paced novel, Catherine L. Moore perceptively uses this theme of a United States dominated by communications, concentrated.

Her hero is Howard Rohan, an actor for the system. When he is called on by Comus (Communications, United States) to assist as a spy in breaking the rebellion occur-

ring in California, he plays the greatest role in his life.

Although the theme is familiar, it is done so delightfully, that every page is pleasurable. Not the least enjoyable techniques of Moore's is that practiced recently by Heinlein, that of using allusions and references to classical plays to support characterizations.

The science in this science-fiction novel is rudimentary, but that is of no importance. A novel of revolution whether it is set in 1790 or in 2000 does not require it.

C.L. Moore is a craftsman (crafts-woman?) who respects words. This novel is a tribute to her skill. Try to read it if you can—it's well worth your while.

Dear Mr. Hamling:

I see you are now running feature science articles in *Madge*. I have a question concerning rocket motors.

To speculate, it would seem to me that the vector sum of the products of mass times acceleration of the particles leaving would equal the force driving the rocket (f equals ma). Observing ordinary explosions, this doesn't seem to be true, and we have the superstition that gunpowder explodes up, dynamite down, and other explosives sideways.

Assuming that the f equals ma formula applies, we know that all the energy of the gas molecules (except the heat loss) and the problem of the motor seems to be one of causing all the molecules to leave in the right direction. How can this be done? Are there moving parts? Perhaps a parabolic reflector? Or have I stated the whole thing wrong?

Nathan L. Smithson

11105 Percy Rd.

Houston 16, Texas

Consulting our science experts we come up with the following report:

You are precisely right in suggesting that the primary purpose of the rocket motor is to convert the random, Gaussian distribution. But there are no moving parts. Basically, the way this is done is by means of a "pressure drop across an orifice or nozzle". Essentially a nozzle converts the potential energy of a pressure difference into the kinetic energy of velocity. For the detailed explanation of this phenomenon (really the core of the rocket motor) refer to any textbook on thermodynamics or physics in which nozzles and Bernoulli's Law are discussed. You are also right in pointing out that unconfined explosives do not possess the uni-directional property erroneously attributed to them. The only occasion when they do, is when the explosive is molded into a cylindrical shape with a conical core removed. When that is done, the result is the famous "shaped charge" which produces a ravening lance of flaming gases capable of penetrating armor plate. with

S-F NOT HIDDEN

Dear Bill Hamling:

In your comment to my last letter you stated that most newsstands display science fiction hidden behind everything else. I don't think that this would apply as a rule to the majority of book stores and magazine counters in my area—at least the ones I patronize. I find that science fiction—even though it has taken a considerable length of time—has finally been recognized for the enjoyable and informative literature it really is. Even those die-hards who admit little else will have to concede that science fact which is now taking place has been discussed, written about, and explained for many years in science fiction.

For a comment on the April issue I'd like to say I've noticed an improvement in Tom Harris' work lately, referring to his newest, **GOODBYE, DEAD MAN!** Also, Edmond Hamilton's **CORRIDOR OF THE SUNS** was excellent. In fact, the whole issue was right in the groove.

Tom Baugh
1800. Lee Ave.
Arcadia, Cal.

We're glad to know that s-f is being properly displayed on the newsstands in your area. Wish it were true all over (see following letter). As for s-f getting recognition, it is certainly belated. We note that a Johns Hopkins University educator, John H. Woodburn recently told a teachers' conference that s-f stimulates students' imagination and adds meaning to cold, hard, scientific fact. "Fiction seems to get through to the students," Woodburn told

the National Association for Research in Science Teaching. "They can ride their natural curiosity as far as they are able." Woodburn added that science fiction is here to stay. He added that if education can't lick fiction, she might as well join it, and make the best use of it as an educational tool. Woodburn concluded by observing that it was quite likely that many of our present-day scientists became interested in the field because their curiosity was aroused by reading science fiction. Coming from a spokesman for one of the higher institutes of learning, these observations are indeed a compliment to s-f. As we said, it's been long overdue! *wlh*

HIDDEN, BUT GOOD!

Dear Bill Hamling:

There was more truth than fiction in your statement in the letter column of the April issue which concerned the newsstand display of s-f.

In fact, while trying to obtain that same issue I couldn't help but wonder if science fiction had gone underground!

At length—after a considerable amount of hunting—I managed to pull forth a copy from behind a pile of *True Story* magazines. The way s-f was concealed you'd have thought it was the *Daily Worker*! This difficulty which I face every month has been a major factor in my decision to subscribe.

Speaking of the April issue, I especially liked Edmond Hamilton's **CORRIDOR OF THE SUNS** which stood head and shoulders above any other story in the issue. That man

knows how to write good s-f!

However, there were other good yarns in the issue too—FLYPAPER PLANET, GOODBYE, DEAD MAN! and MORGAN'S LUCKY PLANET. One I did not like was THE MIND DIGGER.

The cover left me unimpressed, but you usually have good ones so no big gripe here.

Eugene S. Smith
58 Winding Lane
East Hartford, Conn.

We know from experience that your trouble finding s-f is the rule, not the exception. Sure it would be easy to solve if every reader of an s-f magazine subscribed—but the fact is that they don't, so newsstand sales are of great importance. (Go ahead and subscribe now!) We repeat that a great service to the field would be for every s-f reader to physically put s-f magazines out front on their trips to a newsstand. And if s-f can't be found complain to the newsdealer and by phone to the local magazine wholesale distributor. In any event, that subscription would be very welcome! . . . wh

DISTINCTIVE ART

Dear Bill Hamling:

It's been about three years since I've written MADGE. This letter is to compliment you on your artwork which has shown a sharp increase in quality in the past few issues. This is due largely to Malcolm Smith's return as a cover illustrator. Older fans will remember some of the covers he did back in '51, '52, and '53 that were tops in the field. How about another photo-cover by

him?

Another artist showing great promise is D. Bruce Berry. If he paints covers as well as he can do interiors you've got some real talent. His work reminds me a bit of Kelly Freas. Speaking of Freas, I'd like to see him in MADGE again. And ditto Harold McCauley. Some of your best covers were "Mac" covers.

Some say that a cover doesn't help to sell a magazine, but it does in my case and one thing I like is Madge's distinct stable of artists. They don't appear elsewhere, only in your books. Hold on to them.

Bob Munn
Box 175

Atikokan, Ont., Canada

Thanks for the kind words, Bob. You'll see quite a few Smith covers in forthcoming issues. And who knows, perhaps even one of his famed photo-jobs. We also agree with you on Berry. The lad has a nice style and knows his science fiction. He's a fan, you know. . . . wh

GOING TO THE DOGS . . . ?

Dear Editor Hamling:

I do not know whether I am speechless or merely non-plussed. I have been reading science fiction for as long as I can remember—I'm 35 now. It is my opinion that stories in this medium have been slowly but steadily deteriorating to the level of an adolescent mind. I refer not only to your magazines, but to all s-f magazines.

I realize that a great many readers of s-f today are teenagers and/or Johnny-come-latelys. I maintain

however that it would do no harm at all to bring the level of the stories up a bit. My gripe especially has to do with the manner in which some of the plots are formed, presented, and carried through. I suspect that writers of s-f today obtain their plots and ideas from the clap-trap emitted by Hollywood. Story endings, for the most part are trite, platitudinous, and inconclusive.

I'm getting frustrated over s-f!

Wulf K. O. Hubmann
S. S. Atlantic Trader
P. O. Box 7709
Philadelphia 1, Pa.

We do believe you have a valid point in one degree. We have felt for a long time that some of the "awe" and "wonder" was lacking in modern s-f. But we don't agree that s-f has deteriorated to the extent you hint at. One thing you can rest assured of. At MADGE and SPACE TRAVEL—our new magazine replacing TALES—we'll try to recapture that sense of awe and wonder in s-f. As to age groups, meaningless. S-f readers whether 10 or 80 have a higher IQ level than any other escapist reader. S-f is right for the person whose mind asks questions; for the person who can look beyond Earth's atmosphere and dream: "I'd like to go up there myself someday . . ." We doubt whether s-f writers get their plots from Hollywood—it's the other way around. (Man, what the movies do to s-f sometimes shouldn't happen!) At any rate, stick to science fiction. And why not—you're starting to live it!wlh

DARNED IF HE WON'T!

Dear Bill:

I've been reading and collecting s-f for around four years. I've been corresponding with s-f fans for nearly as long, but not once have I taken the time to write to my favorite magazine. I decided to change that today.

I think Malcolm Smith's cover on the April issue was his best since the cover on the July '57 TALES. As long as you keep Smith on the cover of MADGE you'll keep me happy. Although, I would like to see what your new artist, D. Bruce Berry can do on the cover. I think he is the best interior artist you've ever had.

As for the lead novel all I can say is that it is another masterpiece by the Old World Wrecker. CORRIDOR OF THE SUNS even tops THE SHIP FROM INFINITY. Keep the Hamilton novels coming.

Another issue as good as this one and darned if I won't subscribe!

Harry Thomas
310 S. Oak St.
Sweetwater, Tenn.

If you haven't already sent in your subscription, get on the ball! This issue alone should answer all your desires for a good s-f magazine.—Some Smith cover this time, right? But wait until you see some of the ones coming up. Which about winds up shop for this issue. Look for SPACE TRAVEL at your news-dealer, or better yet, send us \$3 for a subscription—and if you haven't subscribed to MADGE yet, make it six bucks! See you next issuewlh

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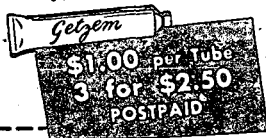
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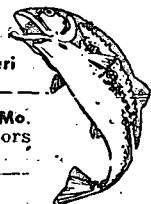
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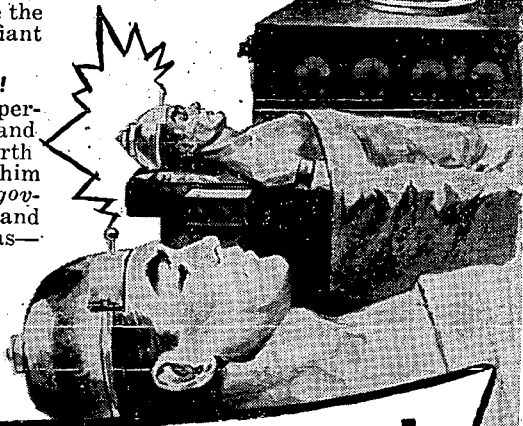
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